

A Creative Process *between* Painting and Body Arts: Carolee Schneemann and Aby Warburg

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ABSTRACT – A Creative Process *between* Painting and Body Arts: Carolee Schneemann and Aby Warburg^{1,2} – This article discusses the issue of the pictorial gesture potency in Carolee Schneemann's creating process and how her use of herself body allowed her to question whether she could, in addition to an image be also an *image maker*: a poetic and theoretical juxtaposition at the same time, which causes specific displacements in her performative work. This study aims to correlate operatory concepts around the *nymph* as a theoretical object, with special attention to its accessories in movement, in the Warburgian sense, from the examination of iconological paths and theoretical approaches inaugurated by Aby Warburg, having as focus the crossings between painting and the body arts.

Keywords: **Performance and Painting. Pathosformeln. Contemporary Poetics. Carolee Schneemann. Aby Warburg.**

RÉSUMÉ – Un Processus de Création *entre* la Peinture et les Arts du Corps: Carolee Schneemann et Aby Warburg – Cet article traite de la question de la puissance du geste pictural dans le processus de création de Carolee Schneemann et de la façon dont son utilisation du corps lui a permis de se demander si elle pouvait, en plus d'une image, être aussi une *image maker*: à la fois une juxtaposition poétique et théorique qui provoque des déplacements spécifiques dans son œuvre performatique. On cherche corréler les concepts opératoires autour de la *nymphé* en tant qu'objet théorique, avec une attention particulière à ses *accessoires en mouvement*, dans le sens warburgien à partir de l'examen des parcours iconologiques et les approches théoriques inaugurés par Aby Warburg, ayant comme accent les croisements entre la peinture et les arts du corps.

Mots-clés: **Performance et Peinture. Pathosformeln. Poétiques Contemporaines. Carolee Schneemann. Aby Warburg.**

RESUMO – Um Processo de Criação *entre* a Pintura e Artes do corpo: Carolee Schneemann e Aby Warburg – O artigo discute a questão da pujança do gesto pictórico no processo de criação de Carolee Schneemann e de como sua utilização do corpo permitiu a ela questionar se poderia, além de uma imagem, ser *também* uma *image maker*: a um só tempo uma justaposição poética e teórica, que causa deslocamentos específicos em sua obra performática. Objetiva-se cotejar conceitos operatórios em torno da *ninfa* como objeto teórico, com especial atenção a seus *acessórios em movimento*, no sentido warburguiano, a partir do exame de percursos iconológicos e abordagens teóricas inaugurados por Aby Warburg, tendo como escopo os atravessamentos entre a pintura e as artes do corpo.

Palavras-chave: **Performance e Pintura. Pathosformeln. Poéticas Contemporâneas. Carolee Schneemann. Aby Warburg.**

Commenting on Carolee Schneemann's *Up to and including her limits* retrospective (1939-2019), held in 1996 at the New Museum of Contemporary Arts in New York, Robert Morgan (1997, p. 97) described it as “[...] intellectually and physically complex, visually excessive, frequently atunning and, at times, emotionally overwhelming”. Schneemann diluted the possibility of demarcating borders between installation, cinema and performance, which would be inconsistent with her poetics. Morgan (1997, p. 98) credited to the stylistic irreducibility of her work one of the reasons why it had been repeatedly “[...] neglected by major museums and by curators [...]”, but it is necessary to dig deeper into her poetic choices and demands, involving processes of signification in her kinetic paintings to understand this rejection.

The artist often warned that her performance works were paintings, breaking the two-dimensional limits of her gesture toward the space. This is the case of the performance presented between 1973 and 1977 that became a reference for that decade and provided the name for the aforementioned exhibition in 1996. In it, Schneemann problematized Abstract Expressionism, especially *Action Painting*, which, according to Harold Rosenberg, would dismiss “[...] the idea of the canvas as a surface on which an object would be represented; the new painters conceived it as an arena, the scene of an event” (Breitwieser, 2015, p. 14).

In this performance, the artist incorporated the pictorial gesture of Jackson Pollock, by drawing on different planes with a crayon, according to her intense movements, nude and suspended by a harness, shifting the interest of the work from the result to the creative process. According to Maura Reilly (2015, p. 112), it materialized as directs “[...] comments on the hyper-masculinity of Action Painting – in particular, the sexualized nature of Pollock's *ejaculatory drip* – [...]” integrating the painting as “[...] action and object [...]” when “[...] it moved through her body.” In 1984, Schneemann would cause another shift from this performance painting, towards an intermedia expansion of painting, in a video whose montage contained different footage of these 1970s performances.

However, if the artist is recurrently recognized as a *pioneer* of performance and feminist art of the 1960s, associated with the issue of the female body by research on its representation in Art History³ and by its role in re-

lation to sociocultural taboos, her many critics rarely made her stand out among New York experimentalists of the 1960s and 1970s. Hence Morgan (1997, p. 97) finding a fragmented reading of her production, because if her work “[...] has often been associated with Fluxus, Neo-Dada, Performance Art, the Beat Generation, and the Happenings, [...] it defies and subsumes all of these categories”. Notwithstanding, if her works defy the two-dimensional limits of the canvas, they also materialize the act, the formative gesture of the painting in all its power.

This article focuses on two performative paintings: *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions* (1963) and *Meat Joy* (1964), which dialogue differently with the modern Western pictorial tradition, inaugurated in the Renaissance, as well as relate painting and theater. If in the first we see an intensification of the gesture and a potentiation of erotic contents totally or partially hidden in the referred tradition, in the second we see the exacerbation of the culturally censored desire in the bodies of women, men and animals, in an ecstatic ritual that overflows it.

By referring to such tradition in such an intense manner, Schneemann evoked a set of previously repressed contents that, however, present issues that cannot be considered exclusively from a markedly masculine gaze. She takes the discourse on the representation of the female body for herself, but by dialoguing with pictorial paradigms that see in it the introduction of beauty, eroticism and desire in Art History, the artist redoubles and complexifies its senses.

Without disregarding the criticism from a significant portion of post-modern feminist theories about her use of her own body, since it would, ultimately, she would present the role of the feminine in a society guided by logos and reaffirm the approach of women to nature, this text seeks another approach to her work. Taking the elements of exposure of the body in these two performances, it is proposed to readdress the operative concepts of *Pathosformel* (*pathos* formula) and *Nachleben der Antike*⁴ according to Aby Warburg (1866-1929). This return is concerned, above all, with elements that constitute the theoretical notion of the *nymph* or even of the presence of the Maenad in the Warburgian oeuvre.

Schneemann saw her own body in performance as potency of liberation from the same aesthetic conventions that marked the use of the female

body and which she started to use in a hyperbolized *pathos*. She related it to different matters, images, instruments and media that directly or indirectly refer to the plastic tradition, developing a sensorial *and* theoretical discourse that problematizes approaches about her work. However, if the inclusion of her work in contemporary art seems evident, it is interesting to reflect on the relation of these performances with the History of Art, in addition to observing the complexity of relations between the incorporation and representation of her body as object, matter, medium and concept in her creative process in play with old gestural codes, in the intrinsic relationship between painting and performance.

Accordingly, this article is dedicated to the issue of the forming gesture potency in Schneemann's creative process in its plastic and theoretical implications and how her use of the body allowed her to question whether, in addition to being an *image maker*, she could *also* be an image, plastic *and* theoretical juxtaposition and overlapping, which causes specific shifts in her work. Thus, we aim to correlate operative concepts around the *nymph* as theoretical object, with special attention to that which would be not her attributes, but her intimate relation with her *animated accessories*, in the sense of Warburg (2013, p. 20), between painting and body arts.

Painting and Pictorial Gesture

Reilly (2015, p. 82) notes that Schneemann's *sensu stricto* painting is often devalued by her critics in favor of the performances, installations and films. The curator refers to the paintings of the late 1950s, when, after coming from Fox Chase, Philadelphia, the artist studied art at Bard College and painting at the Universities of Illinois and Columbia, before moving to New York in 1961. Paintings such as *The Secret Garden* (1956), *Mill Forms* (1958), and *Early Landscape* (1959) show familiarity with gestural and material poetics of Abstract Expressionism. Her dialogue with the History of Art already appears in these paintings, as is the case of *Three Figures after Pontormo* (1957), in which she seemed to transpose to this painting, in an intensely gestural manner, the drawings of the two sides of the same sheet by the Florentine mannerist Jacopo da Pontormo (1494-1557), beyond the two-dimensional canvas. By directing herself toward the exterior, she also

excavated depths below the pictorial layers, in this and in other paintings, with pointed or cutting instruments (Breitwieser, 2015, p. 17).

At the time, her paintings explored modern shocks of perspective spatiality, established in Renaissance, and gestural brushwork became a resource to overcome the limits of the canvas, just as it would be for her future *kinetic theater*. Her move introduced her into the experimental avant-garde of New York, together with artists such as Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine and Robert Rauschenberg, who unfolded experiences of *Action Painting* (Reilly, 2015, p. 82), also dialoguing with other languages in addition to painting, such as poetry and music.

In 1962, she showed her paintings to Leo Steinberg and told him that she was trying to bring them closer to life, with her *dynamic brushwork*, to which the critic responded, according to her⁵, that accomplishing that pretension was impossible. She, then, understood that her painting, differently from *Action Painting*, was conceived as an “[...] self-creating act” (apud Breitwieser, 2015, p. 17). Although Steinberg agreed in some points and encouraged her, they understood differently what the *exploration of painting would be*. Breitwieser notes that Schneemann’s oeuvre could exemplify Clement Greenberg’s apprehension as to the overcoming of what would be appropriate of the pictorial in a painting, in an attempt to disqualify these explorations as mere “dare” (Breitwieser, 2015, p. 19-21) of artists who tried to three-dimensionalize the canvas. But Schneemann would venture beyond, using the body, in addition to other languages. In doing so, she created the issue of becoming an image in addition to being an image *maker*. Her exploration dealt with painting not as a historical artistic category, but as an expanded concept of painting, analogously to that which Rosalind Krauss (1984) would understand as concept of sculpture in the expanded field.

Maura Reilly, curator of *Painting, What It Became?* (2010) at P.P.O.W. Gallery in New York, based on this question, analyzed the artist’s later explorations, related to “[...] other means of expression [...]” (Reilly, 2016, p. 2) that would derive from the artist’s understanding of the “[...] extending visual principles off the canvas (Reilly, 2015, p. 82)”. According to Reilly (2015, p. 82), she always related her work to the pictorial gesture, opening “[...] the frame [...]” and conceiving “[...] the body itself as a tactile

material”. The curator speaks of “[...] performative-paintings, filmic-paintings, or kinetic-paintings” (Reilly, 2015, p. 82) and uses her expression “exploded canvases” (Schneemann, 1997, p. 167) to clarify that her concerns operated as a “[...] grounding mechanism and unifying field [...]” in her most well-known production (Reilly, 2015, p. 82).

Schneemann’s pictorial constructions, as well as Richard Stankiewicz’s sculptures, Rauschenberg’s *combine paintings*, Oldenburg’s reliefs, and John Chamberlain’s *assemblages*, as noted by Reilly (2015, p. 82), involved non-artistic materials, but without necessarily a biographical foundation, as occurred in the Schneemann’s work. *Quarry Transposed* (1960) and *J & C* (1961) show her interest in montage, moving away from the flat canvas, not to deny it, but to extend the pictorial surface beyond it. Other objects become pictorial materials, such as wood, plastics, fabrics, motors, magnetic tapes, glass and photographs, in addition to paint. However, it is necessary to understand the meaning of these uses, as in the *Controlled Burning* series, with small boxes with objects, in which she integrated fire into her creative process, after a fire in the studio in Illinois, in 1960.

If Breitwieser (2015, p. 17-18) compares this choreographed method in addition the randomness of composing with John Cage in experimental music, one can also think of an image creation ritual, involving fire, which, while it can be *controlled*, we know that, in the end, it is uncontrollable⁶. In *For Yvonne Rainer’s ordinary dance* (1962) of this series, she pays homage to one of the founders of the Judson Dance Theater, together with Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton and Elaine Summers, and alludes to the exploration of everyday movements by this experimental dance group, which just as Schneemann used non-artistic materials.

However, although these *paintings-constructions* can be associated with Rauschenberg’s *combines* in the early 1960s, Morgan (1997, p. 98) understands that the artist started to have an intimate relationship with these materials, as a requirement of her creative process. It is also understood that she wondered about what artistic genre this would be, which situates us in front of the crisis of classificatory categories in contemporary art and Art Historiography. It is in this context that we should understand statements such as: “I’m a painter. I’m still a painter and I will die a painter. Everything that I have developed has to do with extending visual principles off

the canvas” (Schneemann, 1993 apud Reilly, 2015, p. 82). Morgan (1997, p. 98) perceives this movement also to other media as an “[...] impulse towards the liberating concept of body and mind as a totality”, so that her integrative work in the early 1960s has a “[...] proto-feminist’ sensibility” that would have “[...] preceded the emergence of feminism as a formal idea at the end of that decade”.

However, what Morgan identified as *proto-feminist sensibility* in her early performances indicates terminological and conceptual problems in the history of contemporary art. This complexity refers to the expansion of her pictorial gesture towards the performing arts, which can cite, displace and even enhance erotic content more or less veiled in the western tradition of easel painting. This crossing of artistic categories and genres that her work encompasses seems to deny her a prestigious place in contemporary art, with rare exceptions⁷, other than under the aegis of *feminist artist*. Evidently, it is not a matter of trying to reduce the importance of such definition, but of observing how it seems to interdict other perceptions of her oeuvre by Art History.

In 1962, Schneemann started *Four Fur Cutting Boards*⁸ from four wooden panels marked by small holes where skins were attached. The panels were painted on both sides with intense gestures and their corners were scorched before materials such as broken glass and mirrors, photographs, colored lights, mobile umbrellas, a hubcap, fabric and motorized parts were affixed to it. A year later, this work became a component, as well as the artist’s body, mirrors, mannequins, plastic sheeting and other materials, in *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions* (Figure 1).



Figure 1 – Carolee Schneemann. *Eye Body #2* from *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera*, 1963, gelatin silver print (2005), 61 × 50.8 cm.

Source: Museum of Modern Art – MoMa, New York⁹.

In each of the *actions for camera*, she *combined* her painted nude body – like plastic and tactile *material* – with this kinetic construction, in what she declared to be “[...] a kind of shamanic ritual” (Schneider, 2002, p. 33), transforming her studio into her body extension. Having first *incorporated herself* into a work, blurring the border between the image and its creator, “[...] seeing and seen, eye and body – hence the work’s title” (Reilly, 2015, p. 96), suggested, according to Rebecca Schneider (2002, p. 35), an “[...] embodied vision, a bodily eye [...] – artist’s eyes –, not only in the seer, but in the body of the seen”.



Figure 2 – Carolee Schneemann. *Eye Body #5* from *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera*, 1963, gelatin silver print (2005), 61 × 50.8 cm.
Source: Museum of Modern Art – MoMa, New York¹⁰.

Her positioning in her work as an active agent contributed to the constitution of her *kinetic theater* (Reilly, 2015, p. 96). While performing covered by various materials, including grease, chalk and plastic, she was photographed 36 times by the Icelandic artist Erró, with these photographs being *transforming actions* like frames from a film. From this series, she expanded the concept of painting in other media, which began to integrate with one another, interspersed with interference operations in photographs and films. The issue of photographic and filmographic image in the artist's creation process demands an examination, as well as the materials of *Eye Body*, especially of her body, of the two garden snakes that glided over it (Figure 2), and of animal skins and plastics that she used as strange casings that dressed and undressed her body. Hence her work is recognized under the poetics of collage: of the artist's own body, of snakes, works, photographs, and other materials, as well as a collage of temporalities, evoked by

these materials and their gestures, movements that allude to poses and reminiscences of images, which reproduce and move among other images, of her view as a creator and of her body as an image. According her photographs (Figure 3) were discarded by galleries and museums, as “[...] purely narcissistic exhibitionism” (Morgan, 1997, p. 98), while she understood them as integrated to the performance, as reappropriation of her sexuality, in the face of usurpation of the female body “[...] by the traditions of art history and, later, by Pop Art” (Morgan, 1997, p. 98)¹¹.



Figure 3 – Carolee Schneemann. *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera*, 1963, 18 gelatin silver prints, 61 x 50.8 cm each.

Source: P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York¹².

Schneemann teamed up with Dick Higgins in 1962, and presented the *Glass Environment for sound and motions performance*, with performers such as Yvonne Rainer, who invited her next year to join the Judson Dance Theater (Schneider, 2002, p. 32). The group performed its *Newspaper Event*, focusing on body sensations in the creation process and the relationship between the body, the materials and the environment, between the individual and the social. According to Schneider (2002, p. 33), her concern with the materiality of the flesh and the “[...] object-status of the female body relative to its socio-cultural delimitations” arose from her experience as an artist woman in the face of male hegemony in Fluxus¹³ and Happenings, in an acquisition of political awareness that caused a turn in their poetic processes, choices and requirements.



Figure 4 – Carolee Schneemann. *Meat Joy*, 1964, photographic record of the performance.
Source: The Artist's Collection¹⁴.

She developed the concept of *kinetic theater*, symbolized by *Meat Joy* (Figure 4), presented in 1964, in Paris, London and New York. Integrated by the experimental musical composition formed as a sound collage by James Tenney, eight performers, four women (including herself) and four half-naked men started the performance with a script with openings to improvisation, like a strange dinner with guests, which became critically deconstructed. In the sequence, another *performer* started pouring raw chickens, fish and sausage on them, with which they started to interact playfully and erotically in an ecstatic *Dionysian* ritual (Figure 5). After playing more and more frantically in order not to let the meats touch the floor, they painted each other with colored paints and began to roll over piles of paper. In this celebration of the flesh, they created living sculptures, gathered and separated, painting themselves as if they were brushes and canvas¹⁵.



Figure 5 – Carolee Schneemann. *Meat Joy*, 1964, photographic record of the performance. Source: P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York¹⁶.

Schneemann describes it as “[...] an erotic vision that came through a series of very visceral dreams of the expanding physical energy – off the canvas, off the frame” (apud Reilly, 2015, p. 104). While Morgan (1997, p. 98) sees it as a “[...] wild ecstatic performance” and highlights its extensive documentation. Having realized the importance of the image record and as a component of the work, she started to understand the filming done as effectively part of the performance. Morgan (1997, p. 98) believes that this perception came from the beginning of the use of “[...] film as a mixed-media form unto itself” and combined with other media and languages, as occurred in *Viet Flakes* (1965), *Fuses* (1964-1967) and *Snows* (1967).

The assumption of image documentation as a crucial and constituent part of performance¹⁷ is due to it “[...] communicate the work’s expressionist quality and to reveal its structure” (Morgan, 1997, p. 98), as well as to the formal and conceptual singularities of its creative process, making the images re-emerge for her kinetic painting, as well as other images, much older, other poses characteristic of modern pictorial tradition. But if she was a milestone for feminism, according to Kristine Stiles, and for the sexual revolution of the 1960s, according to Lucy Lippard, Schneider (2002, p. 33-34) states that, in this decade, Schneemann “[...] felt acutely that her work was devalued as ‘self-indulgent exhibitionism’”¹⁸.

We are interested, therefore, in observing how her reference to this tradition reached certain contents that would have been repressed in

iconographies that would have been naturalized in Art History, through genealogies that apparently would have a logic typical of painting in certain pictorial genres, as it is the case of reclining nudes and mythological scenes. Hence her affirmation of a performative painting, despite the scarcity of attributes historically linked to the language of painting.

In this game between different media, whose measure is painting, Morgan (1997, p. 98) highlights *Interior Scroll* (1975)¹⁹, which would qualify her as a feminist artist. This performance stands out among Schneemann's critical fortune and should favor her inclusion in contemporary art, defining her position face the political and the erotic. According to him, she must be understood in the Post-Minimal and Post-conceptual context of that decade, as well as that her feminism was based on the contrast of the body with "[...] the insular protectiveness of the male brain" (Morgan, 1997, p. 98). Thus, when reading feminist texts on the parchment extracted from her own sex aloud, she "[...] inscribed on or within the sexual body is a discourse inseparable from her body" (Morgan, 1997, p. 98). Morgan (1997, p. 98) also correlates this performance with *Eye Body*, "[...] in which the artist [she] wears two horns on her forehead" in reference to the rays of light (Ex 34: 29-35) of the prayer of the Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Moses* (c.1513-1515). In *Interior Scroll* she "[...] locates the source of power and intellect within the female sexual organs – the intuitive as opposed to the rationalistic concept of artistic creativity" –, transforming the "[...] masculinist assumptions of certain Minimal and Conceptual artists into a feminist discourse about the body" (Morgan, 1997, p. 98).

Morgan (1997, p. 100) sees in the tension between these two themes a mark of her work, indicating a residue of modernist primitivism, wrapped in nostalgia and idealization, but also a place of conflict and scandal in relation to the loss of civilizational values in the use of the body associated to free and wild pleasure, or in "[...] acts of savagery", as in *Meat Joy*. But it was not a *use* of the *primitive*, but a *dive*, although under accusations of fetishizing it. Her search for ancestry and for the representation of the feminine would also take shape in later works, such as *Ask the Goddess* (1991) and *Vulva's School* (1995). In relation to her evocations of the Goddess, Morgan (1997, p. 100) understood that the antecedents of her work go "[...] back as the mythic cults of goddess [...]" to Her, hence she compares

the old rites to the “[...] mind-body split that became exacerbated with the rise of modern technology”.

In the 1960s, she cited moments of rupture and reaffirmation of the Western pictorial tradition, posing as Édouard Manet’s modern *Olympia* (1963) in the performance *Site* (1964), at the invitation of Robert Morris, which moved the planes of the space that contained it, without finding a place for the modern in contemporary times. Modern that would be exalted by the text of Warburg (2015c) on Manet’s *Déjeuner sur l’herbe* (1863), which would be the landmark, in 1929, of the *Manétisme* fortune, according to Andrea Pinotti (2013, p. 1), in offering “[...] a new pictorial horizon, opened by a scandal”²⁰.

Breitwieser (2015, p. 18) understands, as occurred with Pontormo, that the artist would extend her dialogues with the History of Art. In *Sir Henry Francis Taylor* (1961), celebrated literate, cousin of Virginia Wolf and Julia Margaret Cameron, she criticized the difference in treatment between the sexes in the Victorian society. While in *Lou Andreas-Salomé* (1965), she portrayed the writer with her famous male intellectual interlocutors, Rainer Maria Rilke and Friedrich Nietzsche, on a tangle of tapes with recordings of quotes from the psychoanalyst.

But, starting with *Eye Body*, her critical dialogue with the History of Art problematized the roles of women and their bodies being seen by a male gaze, more specifically of the nude female body and of its conventional poses in certain pictorial genres, of her gaze as an artist and of the manipulation of her own body, as well as of the body of other women and men, as in *Meat Joy*. However, by *incorporating* this problematization, that is, by placing herself in the *nymph’s* place, would not this be a reaffirmation of the place of the female body in the aforementioned tradition and in the patriarchal society? And could her search for the *antecedents* of the great feminine and the remission to the ancient *mystical cults in praise to the Goddess* be mistakes of an archaic vision that *reconnects* the feminine to nature?

For incorporating Dionysian contents, which made the corporeality phenomenal, her work was rejected by critics, curators and gallery owners, in addition to a considerable portion of feminist criticism, which even after *Interior Scroll* and *Up to and including her limits* often silenced in relation to her previous performances, associated to what would be a *discharge of libid-*

inal energy or a *Dionysian abandonment*. In this sense, *Eye Body's* serpents, although seemingly harmless, can have an important role in understanding certain choices of Schneemann, beyond their consideration as mere *pictorial* attribute, as well as other matters and gestures put into action in *Meat Joy*.

The Dance of the Serpent and the Image of the Maenad

The serpent emerges in Schneemann's work associated with the search for ancient matriarchal traditions and ancestral cults called *primitive*, identified with an ancient *imagery*, which seems to return, consciously or not. Its symbolic key refers to *The Migration of Symbols*, by Donald Alexander Mackenzie (1926)²¹, contemporary of Aby Warburg. She stated that when she began researching its symbolism in 1960, she did not suspect that the serpent could be associated with the masculine in some cultures and, after knowing it, she decided to reinterpret historical myths, appropriating the concept of *vulval space*, which she understood as being the symbolism of the serpentine form:

From my identification with the symbolism of the female body, I made the further assumption that carvings and sculptures of the serpent shape were attributes of the Goddess and would have been made by women worshippers (artists) as analogous to their own physical, sexual knowledge. I thought of the vagina in many ways – physically, conceptually; as a sculptural form, an architectural referent, the source of sacred knowledge, ecstasy, birth passage, transformation. I saw the vagina as a translucent chamber of which the serpent was an outward model: enlivened by its passage from the visible to the invisible, a spiraled coil ringed with the shape of desire and generative mysteries, attributes of both female and male sexual powers (Schneemann, 1997, p. 234).

It is not the intention of this article to contrast Mackenzie's theories and, even less, Schneemann's assertions with Warburg's reflection on the Moki serpent ritual. It is, differently, to understand how Warburg (2015a) sought to trace the infiltration of the serpent and its cult, especially in the final remarks in the lecture *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, which he delivered in 1923²².

The lecture reported the 1896 expedition to New Mexico, preceded by research at the Peabody Museum, Harvard, and at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, on discoveries by *First Nations* researchers, such as

Franz Boas, Frederick W. Hodge, Frank H. Cushing and James Mooney. Thus, he was able to plan his trip to the settlements where he would meet Pueblo Indians who performed rituals related to the *primitive* serpent cult.

According to Warburg (2015b, p. 258) “[...] the art of the indians pointed to two distinct areas, which [...] were a single activity: dance and visual arts”, understanding dance as expressive openness of the gesture inherent to the rituals. Here, the proposal is to bring this broad sense of visual and body arts closer to an expanded sense of contemporary art, which seeks to dissolve boundaries between the respective categories established by the history of modern art. Warburg (2015b, p. 260) emphasized that the link between the artistic *expressions* that are separated in the West would be based on “[...] a common trunk of two religious representations, which emerge as magical practices of a cosmological vision of world that is deeply elaborate and grandiose”. Hence he understands that the drawings about the serpent saga received from priest Cleo Jurino reveal “[...] conceptions auxiliary to the ordering fantasy surprisingly identical to those found [...] in the terrible pagan Antiquity of Europe and Asia” (Warburg, 2015b, p. 260), but which in the visual production of the Pueblo indians could only be known through Hispanic and American cultural overdeterminations (Warburg, 2015b, p. 261).

Warburg (2015a, p. 200) hoped that “[...] the plastic art of the Pueblo indians, with its symbolic ornamentation and masked dance [...]” would be able to indicate “[...] the extent to which we can observe the essential characteristic features of primitive pagan humanity”. Hence his concern with photographs, which involve an attention to images, which would apprehend living testimonies of that culture, not being reduced to mere photographic reproductions. They would be an integral part of a new episteme in Art History. The Pueblo indians were dedicated to ancestral practices and to a technical culture that stood out in architecture and applied arts (Warburg, 2015a, p. 200-201).

To deal with such paradox, he adopted different time models in order to examine their ritual dances and imagetic production. Thus, Warburg put on the axis of his observation what would be, for modern man, a “schizoid” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 201) symptom between the participatory belief in the influencing powers of their rites and the practical intellect that enabled the

achievements of their technical culture. At the same time, he identified the modern European prejudice that interdicts the vision of culture itself, full of survivals, hence the concept of split in modern society. This reasoning led him to relate Art History with Anthropology and Psychoanalysis to examine how the problem of the survival of this “[...] pagan worldview [...] among the Pueblo Indians provides us with a parameter for the processes of development that [...] pass through the man of classical paganism and arrive at modernity” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 202).

According to Warburg (2015a, p. 202), the main triggering factor for magical practices would be the climate of this region. After witnessing corn propitiation cults in Oraibi and hunting cults in Santo Idelfonso, he indirectly learned about the serpent ritual in Walpi. Warburg (2015a, p. 209) understood, based on his cosmological view, that the serpent as a *meteorological divinity* is linked mimetically to the ray that brings rain, in a causal and magical way. Therefore, masked dances were *social measures* to guarantee survival, being *schizoid*, in the sense that they result in the paradoxical encounter of magic and technique: “[...] juxtaposition of logical civilization and magical causality [...]”, being “[...] halfway between magic and *logos*” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 218-219). Would not this be, in a way, the duality that seems to survive, albeit critically and with energetic inversions, in the coextension between visual and body arts in Schneemann’s performing painting? Would her kinetic painting, then, be reacting to the categories of language established by the plastic tradition and by the historiography of modern art, in a gesture of overflow?

Warburg (2015a, p. 235) associated the concepts of *mystical participation* and *mimesis* in this solidarity of dance and plastic arts. After collecting about one hundred rattlesnakes, the priests magically throw them on the colored sand drawing of lightning-serpents in an underground temple, in order to undo it, mixing them with the sand. Thus, they become simultaneously “[...] the rain, the serpent and the (primitive) saint living in animal form” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 235). At the height of the festival, they are taken and attached to a bush. Each is removed by a priest who hands it over to two Indians, who dance painted and dressed in furs, one with the snake in their mouth, until they are returned to the plains, to bring rain and to conjure the climate (Warburg, 2015a, p. 235-236).

The text's epilogue alludes to its association of the settlements of New Mexico and ancient Greece: the European origin of the serpent dance in the Dionysian mysteries (Warburg, 2015a, p. 236-237). And then it begins a journey showing how the "[...] redemption of the bloodthirsty cult of animal sacrifice, with the Maenads and their serpents alive and torn in the ecstasy of the orgiastic cult permeates, as the most intrinsic of the ideals of purification, the religious movement from East to West [...]", pinpointing cultic and imagetic survivals of this dance, interspersed with cosmological visions and mimetic and propitiatory powers (Warburg, 2015a, p. 238-239).

After mentioning the terrible Babylonian *primordial serpent* Tiamat in the Old Testament, it travels Greece, from the *tragic and hopeless pessimism* with *the ruthless* Erinys to the saving force in Antiquity. With Laocoon, the serpent as a destructive force from the underworld led to the "[...] tragic symbol [...]" of divine punishment with "[...] maximum human suffering" (Warburg, 2015a, p. 239). But Warburg (2015a, p. 240) contrasted this view with the "[...] genius that is friendly to man, classic and glorified": Asclepius, who after being "[...] venerated as a serpent [...]", sees it symbolically "[...] entwined around his therapeutic staff [...]", because its skin change reveals that "[...] it is capable of diving into the earth and reemerging from it".

Warburg (2015a, p. 241-242) identified Asclepius' iconographic transpositions in medieval manuscripts as survivals that resignify their contents in other forms, as a cosmic divinity that influences the sign of Scorpio, as "[...] mathematical delimitation of limits and bearer of fetish". Thus, he recognized evidence "[...] identical to the magical approaches of the indians face the serpents [...]", such as "[...] the incubation in the temple, the serpent, the way it is carried with the hands and [...] venerated as a source of divinity [...]" (Warburg, 2015a, p. 241-242), although, eventually, representative marks only survived formally, having lost their referents.

Warburg (2015a, p. 243-244), finally, takes an "[...] example of the elementary indestructibility of this memory of the cult of the serpent [...]" in an 18th century painting on the ceiling of a church after identified as Swiss: the martyrdom of Laocoon under the serpent of Moses built from the staff of Asclepius, hence the typification of the creation and destruction of the serpent and of the sacrificial complex and of the survival of the idola-

try of the Old Testament, which it represents among the reforming prophets (Num. 21:4-9; II Kings 18:4). Having governed “[...] the unfolding of the biblical order [...]”, the serpent as the “[...] most provocative and hostile [...]” symbol of Judeo-Christian culture, even in iconographies of the Crucifixion and in Renaissance popular culture, became a target of the “[...] the struggle against idolatry” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 244-246).

The issue of its indestructibility in times to come involves the notion of *Nachleben der Antike*. Returning to the Pueblo ritual, Warburg (2015a, p. 247-248) concluded that “[...] in the face of the incomprehensible in the processes of nature, the Indians counterpoise with their will to apprehend; because thusly they themselves metamorphose into one of these causes [...]” materialized in the “[...] mythological causality in the form of dance”. Thus, through the polarization of *logos* and magic, operationalized by the symbol, he affirmed that the “[...] symbolism of the serpent should indicate [...] the transformation that goes from the symbolism of the body and reality and that is caught with the hands to the symbolism of what is only thought” (Warburg, 2015a, p. 247-248). But after following the path of the serpents whereby itsinfiltrated classical, medieval and Renaissance culture, Warburg (2015a, p. 253) questioned the viability of its survival in modern technical culture, under the aegis of *logos*.

How, then, to understand Schneemann’s choice for this *demonic animal* in *Eye Body*? It is worth remembering that the way through which the artist approached its *symbolism* was not that of Warburg, but that of MacKenzie, who advocated the ascendancy of matriarchy over patriarchy, over an essentialist background²³. Following Warburg’s theoretical path, we consider as montages, involving photographic reproductions of the artist, works concerning the representation of the female body in *Native Beauties* (1962-1964), her archaic *imagery* in *Unexpectedly Research* (1992) or in the performance lecture *Vulva’s Morphias* (1997).

By evoking figurations of the feminine, from prehistoric images, which Schneemann strategically *reinterpreted* as produced by women, to evocations of the feminine such as the *nymph*, such as the Maenad or such as the Goddess, more than constituting an iconographic inventory, the artist puts the image *at work*. This emergency maintains an intimate relationship with the issue of the *image maker*. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the

oxymoron of Teresa de Lauretis (1987, p. 20), manifested by all representation of the feminine, that “[...] woman is unrepresentable, except as representation”.

The *Nymph* and the *Representations* of her Body

Warburg devoted himself to research related to the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* from 1926 until his death in 1929, the year in which he wrote the essay on Manet’s *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe*. Roland Recht (2012, p. 54-55) pointed out that, to him, the issue of the ancient in modernity was related to exogenous elements of the conscious search for an Apollonian ancient, in images that he recognized as an *ancient nymph*, as in the figure on the right of the *Birth of St. John the Baptist* (1486-1490) by Domenico Ghirlandaio, which Recht relates to Jensen’s character Norbert Hanold’s search for Gradiva²⁴. Understanding the Warburgian *Pathosformel* as “[...] a *superlative* form of the language of gestures, which translates the Florentines’ need to resolve, through image, psychic conflicts [...]”, Recht (2012, p. 55-59), contributed to the discussion about the relation between the structure of the *Bilderatlas* with the structures of collage “[...] as an essentially plastic principle [...]” and of montage in Walter Benjamin. It is significant that Warburg has recognized, in his essay on *Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*, “[...] an example of late development [...]” (Recht, 2012, p. 57-59) of the *Pathosformel*, with sources that go back to 16th century works and ancient sarcophagi.

To understand Warburg’s return, but also Morris and Schneemann’s return to Manet, we resort to *Manétisme*, with which Pinotti (2013, p. 1-4) aligns authors since the 19th century, highlighting Warburg and Georges Bataille²⁵, who valued Manet’s modern rupture. However, in *Site* there is a complexification of this concept, as the performance reverberates *Olympia* as a landmark of modernity, but discredits its entry into contemporary art. Furthermore, the interests of this citation for Morris and for Schneemann were divergent, which explains the subsequent criticism she made of her participation (Schneider, 2002, p. 31). In *Olympia* the nudity without shame and the defiant look of the model are managed by Manet and not by her (Schneider, 2002, p. 25-27). But when Schneemann assumed her pose, she assumed her position and intended to assume the agency on this issue, by placing herself as an image *and* as an artist in *Site*, disturbing the logic of

the representation of the female body socially and culturally marked by the male gaze, which did not happen. In addition, if in Manet's *Olympia* the naked body of the white woman coincides with the scopic field and contains the vanishing point, from which the black woman²⁶ is separated, therefore made absent, in *Site*, she was literally excluded.

According to Warburg (2015c, p. 349), the *Déjeuner* proved the code-termination of the “[...] formal and objective nexuses and the plastic tradition [...]”. In it, Manet evoked the *Pastoral concert* (1508-1509)²⁷, which did not neutralize the revolutionary content of the scene with the naked woman and dressed men. Warburg (2015c, p. 349) clarified that part of the work's modernity is due to Manet evidencing “[...] that it is first of all the participation in the full spiritual heritage that creates the possibility of discovering a style that generates new expressive values [...]”, extracting its effectiveness from the “[...] nuance of recreation [...]”.

If this *participation* in European culture and its antecedents, whose properties it would start to share, gives legibility to the work regarding the recognition of the model, the epistemological displacement caused by Manet's choice problematizes the same tradition that is appropriated. Such displacement causes, if not an inversion of values, the valorization of latent elements that were hidden in the very models. Warburg (2015c, p. 350) recognizes, in an iconographic chain, the anteriority of the calcography work *Judgement of Paris* (1514-1518) – which Marcantonio Raimondi created based on a now lost drawing by Raffaello Sanzio – in relation to Manet's painting, which Theodore G. Pauli commented on *Rafael and Manet* (1908), as well as that this drawing was based on the relief of a Roman sarcophagus from the 3rd century A.D., encrusted on the façade of Villa Medici, in Rome.

According to Warburg (2015c, p. 351), the group of three figures in the lower right corner of the old relief is present in Raimondi and Manet, in which “[...] the play of gestures and physiognomy is consummated in an energetic transformation of the represented humanity [...]” until reaching, *passing through engraving*, the “[...] configuration of a free humanity [...]” in painting. These demigods would attend the judgement that opens the Trojan War on the beauty of the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, present in other ancient and modern works, which Warburg (2015c, p. 351-

353) contrasted with the relief and engraving. When approaching these three figures to those of the *Déjeuner*, he observed that “[...] the connecting element is the head of the nymph of the fountain, which is turned towards the spectator, present in the Italian work [...]” (Warburg, 2015c, p. 353). As a mark of the secularization of this process, in addition to the loss of her adoring posture, she notices an imaginary observer on the earth, an awareness that Manet would reinforce in even more mundane terms.

Warburg (2015c, p. 355-357) understood that Raffaello inaugurated the “[...] archaeologizing transport of the gods to the realm of sculptural-looking beauty [...]”, which had the corollary of overcoming the old gods as “[...] powers of destiny [...]”, removing the chaotic content of their figurations. Analousy, the mathematization of the pictorial space through a linear perspective imposed the corporeality and proportionality of the figures, which in the Renaissance came to be governed by technical culture, which is corroborated in other *Judgments of Paris* in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Therefore, one should not ignore the exemplary value of this theme, linking the issue of beauty and desire to the presence of the *nymph*, which are essential in the pictorial tradition that Schneemann mentions regarding the representation of women and their bodies in Art History. After Warburg, Hubert Damisch shifted the discussion to the issue of beauty in this discipline in *Le Jugement de Pâris* (1992). Damisch (1992, p. 7-8) explored the psychoanalytic notion of beauty not as an ideal of beauty, but as a construct linked to the human elaboration of pleasures that substitute jouissance that would structure the bases of a civilization, in terms of a libidinal economy.

He then began a journey from Warburg, passing through the *Judgments of Paris* by Pieter P. Rubens (1600-1638) and Antoine Watteau (c. 1720), reaching the Pablo Picasso's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1959-1961), in dialogue with Manet's painting. Thus, he identified not iconographic transpositions, in the Panofsky sense, but a *work of image*, relating myth, beauty, art and the unconscious. This theme would be privileged to address the issue of beauty in this pictorial tradition, since the judgment of the mortal before the naked goddesses was based on sexual difference and the arousal of desire, and their displacement to their physical characteristics, hair and

drapery, transforming beauty into an unsettling problem, in addition to leading humanity to war and suffering.

Damisch (1992, p. 53-54) commented on the discomfort of the public and of the artistic milieu before the *Déjeuner*, at the Salon de Refuses in 1863, which exhibited the sexual difference in the raw. He investigated its reception, which overdetermined the scandal of the Salon where it was exhibited, along with hundreds of other works rejected that year by the official jury of the Salon. Damisch (1992, p. 55-56), then, asked what this painting “[...] showed that should not be seen [...] without, paradoxically, the model’s smile not engendering in the viewer that same feeling of *uncanny strangeness*” that generated laughter in the public, although the public had not laughed at Paul Baudry’s *La perle et la vague* (1862) and Alexandre Cabanel’s *La Naissance de Vénus* (1863), in the official Salon. It was not a rejection of the nude, but of the “[...] issue of *distinction* or *distancing*, since Manet’s painting refuses any poetic or mythological alibi” (Damisch, 1992, p. 53-54).

The exposure of the woman’s naked body in this pictorial tradition is raised by the dialogue that Damisch promoted with the fortune of the *Déjeuner*. When commenting on lapses in the supposed objectivity of the criticism, he accuses it of an “[...] endemic blindness [...]”, manifested by a flight of elements that constitute beauty, a flight of the gaze on it, having been found its *indecent* compared to contemporary works and “[...] classics whose longevity and renown immunized them from [the same] accusations” (Damisch, 1992, p. 57-59).

He also identified critical comments on the composition of the *Déjeuner*, which would reveal the “[...] technique of *montage* or *collage*, which appears as one of the main forces in the work of the painting” (Damisch, 1992, p. 59). This strengthens the feeling that its composition is artificial, inorganic, on which he proposes a question that will have consequences in the History of Art, as well as for Schneemann’s work: “But what does it mean to desire a body in painted form?” (Damisch, 1992, p. 59). This question allowed him to explore the connection²⁸ between the judgement of Paris and the public judgement of Paris before the Salon des Refuses in the relationship between the *indecent* beauty and the official beauty, within the framework of Art History. Hence, we could also question the motivation of

the criticism from both the *establishment* and feminist strands on the exposure of nudity in *Eye Body* and *Meat Joy*.

In 1864, Ernest Chesneau recognized in the *Déjeuner* the engraving of Raimondi, which was “[...] well known in the studios [...]”, despite having composed with these poses under “[...] a collage effect, imitating the postures of the nymph (a strangely muscular and androgynous nymph, if it really is a nymph) and of the two river gods” (Damisch, 1992, p. 62-63). But Warburg saw this painting “[...] as the last link in a long chain that goes back from the Renaissance to the Hellenistic period” (Damisch, 1992, p. 63). Damisch pointed out that critics, such as the Goncourt brothers, did not understand the “[...] cryptic citations that demand interpretation [...]” of works from the past as “[...] proof of an amazing lack of imagination [...]”, in parodies that would be “[...] farce or *blague d’atelier*” (Damisch, 1992, p. 63).



Figure 6 – Carolee Schneemann. *Eye Body #1* from *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera*, 1963, gelatin silver print (2005), 61 × 50.8 cm.

Source: Museum of Modern Art – MoMa, New York²⁹.

Schneemann, however, does not refer directly to them, but to the figuration of the feminine in this tradition forged by male gazes in the painting established from the Renaissance and by its return to Greco-Roman Antiquity. The non-linear character of her treatment of iconographic sources, however, turns to a structure of montage (Figure 6), here related to Warburg and his research on “[...] the pre-figurative function of pagan deities”³⁰. We infer, therefore, that, by evoking the strength of the gesture that forms the painting, albeit criticizing elements of the modern pictorial tradition, the artist did so by incarnating the movement of the image and the image in motion into her gestural corporeality. Thus, she would also have summoned the archaic content of the female image, linked to Dionysian contents of the formation of the image in motion and of its cultural memory. But were not these the Dionysian contents that, by *reviving* Apollonian contents of ancient (classical) art, the Renaissance would also have made return from their latency, and that infiltrated the details, hair, draperies whose movements Warburg (2013, p. 20) noticed had no *cause* in the rational logic of the work?

The Gesture of the *Nymph* and her Moving Accessories

In another return to Warburg, Georges Didi-Huberman discusses the folding of the female body in the close-fitting, fluttering, fallen drapery, in *Ninfa Moderna* (2002). According to him, this figure became disturbing in the turn of century. Although without “[...] institutional power [...]”, it has the power to disturb the soul, which makes it dangerous, linked “[...] to desire, to time, to memory” (Didi-Huberman, p. 2002b, p. 7). To support this claim, he evokes it as literary characters from Théophile Gautier to Stéphane Mallarmé and André Breton. Hence, also, the reference to the modern “[...] science of the soul [...]” that Freud would see, in 1885, in “hysterical” (Didi-Huberman, p. 2002b, p. 7) patients in Jean Charcot’s amphitheater at Salpêtrière, and later in his patients such as Anna, Emma and Dora. Hence Gradiva’s *captivating* image, “[...] as if [she] managed to make analytical knowledge [...] a disturbing exercise, memory and desire gathered in the same apparition” (Didi-Huberman, 2002b, p. 8-10). She would be the *nymph* that Warburg recognized in her “[...] moving accessories [...]”, hair and drapery (Campos, 2018, p. 262).

Thus, the “Nymph permeates the objects of the Warburgian art history as a true enigmatic *organism* [...]”, simultaneously showing itself to be elusive and “[...] tenacious as a fossil [...]”, designating “[...] in Warburg, the impersonal heroine of the *Nachleben* – the *survival* of these paradoxical things of time” (Didi-Huberman, 2002b, p. 10-11). Hence he seeking the appearance of the *nymph* through the centuries in iconographic types of the plastic tradition, especially in the *types* in which she makes a deliberate movement towards the ground. According to Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 11-12), Warburg did not ignore the “[...] modern destiny [...] of these strongly eroticized representations [...] of the fall of the bodies: they culminated in Füssli, Ingres or Goya, in Courbet, in Degas and, certainly, in Manet”.

Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 12-13) is interested in the dynamography³¹ of this progressive fall and extends the sense of temporal declination of its apparitions: “Like the aura [...], the Nymph *declines* with modern times”. To this end, he evokes the concept of *clinamen*, on the one hand in *the phenomenological axis of falling* in the dream, in Binswanger’s theory, dealing with the body movement attributed to the *nymph*, when inclined to the forces of desire, and, on the other hand, in the sense of a deviation of the movement in Lucretius’ theory of the creation of matter, as a deviation of intensities, a figurability, as a *work* “[...] of condensations and displacements” (Didi-Huberman, 2002b, p. 13-16). Thinking in progressive terms, as in a film, he imagines the fall of the *nymph* as a “[...] bifurcation that takes the form of a very slow dissociation of nudity in relation to the fabric that previously dressed her [...]”, which divests her and again embraces her as the sheet in the bed on which she will fall.

Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 16-20) deduces from this that this fabric would assume a “[...] figural autonomy [...]” and that “[...] since the Renaissance, the movement has accelerated: the textile surfaces (the folds) tend to bifurcate body surfaces (the flesh)”. Thus, he begins his journey of the Venuses from Botticelli to Titian. In this transmutation of the accessory, the fabrics that protected her body in her *pathos*, would go on to mimic it, becoming pathetic receptacles, hence Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 20) recognizing, in these *canvases (toile)* “[...] the function of screen (*écran*) – in the cinematographic sense [...]”, in the long duration.

This progression would confirm, according to Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 20), the Warburgian perception of drapery as “[...] a pathetic tool [...]” capable of receiving “[...] dynamic inversions”. He then looks at the “[...] obsidian cloths [...]” abandoned in the lower corners of paintings such as Titian’s *Bacchanal* (1518-1519) or Nicolas Poussin’s *The Triumph of Pan* (1636), reminding us of the fallen cloth (*pan*) on the *Déjeuner* next to a bouquet and a comedy mask (Didi-Huberman, 2002b, p. 24), a trace of its connection with theater.

Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 25-45), then, recapitulates the film hypothesis and looks for *nymphs* in a hidden place to which, according to Heinrich Heine, the pagan Gods and Goddesses “[...] had to flee and seek their salvation under all kinds of guises [...]” in the face of the appearance of the Christian God: the marble saints lying in chapels of the 17th and 18th centuries, wrapped in dynamic draperies, which receive their *pathos*. Finally, in the 19th century, he took the ecstatic cloths of the Goncourt Brothers’ *Madame Gervaisais* (1869) and Émile Zola’s *Le ventre de Paris* (1873).

Thus, Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 46-49) arrives at what Warburg identified as a secular emptying of the referent: the loss of transcendence: “Such are the *decline*, the fall of the Nymph [...] in contemporary misery [...]”, the secularization of the aura transforming Warburg’s *moving accessories* into rags. He proposes, then, an archeology of the streets of the great European cities, as a “[...] terrain of anachronisms [...]”, inspired by Benjamin, when finding the rags from ancient clothes, such as that which Didi-Huberman (2002b, p. 64) finds discarded in a photograph by Eugène Atget.



Figure 7 – Carolee Schneemann. *Eye Body #6* from *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions for Camera*, 1963, gelatin silver print (2005), 61 × 50.8 cm.
Source: Kunsthall Winthertur (2018)³².

This folding of bodies would confer another meaning to Schneemann’s *moving accessories*, the revelation of the history of these cloths, clothing, furs, but also of plastics (Figure 7), flesh – often in a visceral space almost unbearable to *logos*, for deconstructing hierarchies in a breathtaking way – and other accessories that she does not cease to use, as well as the poses from the same *blagues d’atelier* of Manet, be it in *Interior Scroll*, in *Eye Body* or in the orgy of *Meat Joy*. Or, we could say that through the poses that crystallized gestures, she would be making these *cloths* perform.

The problems raised by Didi-Huberman’s path evoke Warburg both in relation to his view of the past and of the modern. If the impersonal *nymph*, conceived as a theoretical object, permeates Warburg’s work from Antiquity to Modernity, she would also be present, under an energetic inversion – or a critical displacement – in Schneemann’s work. The artist would have intentionally incorporated conventional figures of the female body, of beauty, of desire. Even though she was aware of the relationship between desire and representation, according to the sense of the female nude as “[...] an obsessive terrain of representational fantasy” (Schneider, 2002, p. 6), perhaps unconsciously she *also* promoted the emergency of an-

cient *Pathosformeln* in dialectical images that provided montages of lightning bolts of the *indecent* character of the ostentation of sexual difference. This could explain the effectiveness of her problematization of the gaze and of the body that invert the sides of the same fabric, or of a thin film, united as a Moebius strip, between the image and the image maker, seriously playing with the proposed models, manipulated and supported by men through the centuries.

If Warburg (2016, p. 187–188) sought in the serpent dance the foundations of “[...] human expression in figurative work as an effigy of practical life in movement (in the case of religious cult or drama of culture through courtesan festivity or through theater³³)”, we can question the inextricable intimacy that she established between painting and performance, by moving through times, poses, gestures, conventions, milestones in Art History, and the roles of the feminine in art, shuffling historically demarcated categories and languages. These crossings remind us of the character Vanda Jourdain from *Venus in fur*³⁴, whose displacements to the character Wanda von Dunayev intensify, involving her incarnation as Maenad and the personification of Venus. In this action, the traditions of Greek and modern theater, literature and cinema also intertwine.

As in Vanda’s *skin changes*, Schneemann’s citations raised the emergence of *Pathosformeln*, which comes up against her paradoxical inscription in essentialism *and* materialism, wanting her body to be provocative and “[...] marked, written over in a text of stroke and gesture discovered by my creative feminine will” (Schneemann, 1997, p. 52). In other words, she would not only actively exhibit her image, but this would be enhanced as a dialectical image.

The conduct towards the world that Warburg (2015b, p. 258) identified in the *Pueblo* indians in relation to the serpent ritual is distinguished from the modern conduct because “[...] the mimetic image must forcibly establish the bond, while we long for the spiritual and real distancing”. He proposes a privileged place for dance as a manifestation of causality – “[...] this scientific conquest of the so-called primitives” (Warburg, 2015b, p. 263-264) –, for this encounter between the animal and the human. In this sense, the adoption of serpents by Schneemann calls for that which is the most participatory in the indexes of a mimetic relationship that in the pic-

torial tradition was naturalized as a mere identifier, but which is an evocation of an ancient foundation.

The interest of Warburg (2015c, p. 360) in the *Déjeuner* was, on the one hand, “[...] to indicate the human expressive movement maximized in an intensified movement as a hereditary function of the culture of pagan Antiquity [...]” and, on the other hand, “[...] to indicate the human expressive movement in a state of deep rest as a hereditary mnemonic function [...]”, which form a polarity governed by complementary forces such that valuing one pole unbalances this relationship. He saw the end of a long path of overcoming sculpture in favor of painting in the “[...] new world of totality between man and nature, the missing link between the Olympic apple and the French secular luncheon” (Warburg, 2015c, p. 360).

In this sense, it is necessary to think about the most fundamental notion of painting that Schneemann seems to evoke, by extracting from it the strength of the pictorial gesture incorporated, manifested phenomenologically in her body and in her movement. It is as if the *vital remains* of the Maenads that were crystallized in the poetic and pictorial images, which are at the very foundation of the Greek theater, which were, in a way, imprisoned in the two-dimensionality of the pictorial surface, obsessively insisted on returning to the three-dimensional space, intermingling myriads of temporalities. It is not without reason that Schneider (2002, p. 7) understands that Schneemann’s oeuvre “[...] opens the legacies of the visual perspective related to the *scene* of the body made explicit in contemporary feminist performance”. Thinking of ancient relations between plastic arts, theater and dance, as in the Native American rituals and 15th century Florentine painting, in addition to the 16th century Florentine theater, in the light of Warburg, provides the possibility for us to think about different survivals of the ancient intense gesture in the Modernity of Bertold Brecht, Antonin Artaud, Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman, but also in Pina Bausch and, why not, in Carolee Schneemann. Analogously, we could think of the concept of *Pathosformel* in the light of the overflow of her pictorial gesture to body arts.

Notes

- ¹ This text is the result of research with funding from National Council for Scientific and Technological - CNPq and postdoctoral research with scholarship from The Federal District Research Support Foundation (FAP/DF), Brazil, at L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris.
- ² This text is the excerpt of a more extensive investigation, the preliminary presentation of which was published (Pugliese, 2019), and another excerpt, concerning the question of the poetic and epistemological status of photography in the works of Warburg and Schneemann, was presented at the Warburg 2019 International Symposium, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in April 2019.
- ³ This is the disciplinary field of art history, whose discussions about its objects, theoretical-methodological premises and boundaries are inherent to the very constitution of this sphere of knowledge, especially with regard to the problematization of the relationship between image and time. The theoretical explanation of such issue will not be addressed here, but it should be understood that it is precisely the specificity of this problematization that, in a way, Schneemann's work touches, as well as its inscription within the scope of art history. In this sense, see developments of the aforementioned relationship between image and time in art history, including the critique of trivial models of time, in which Georges Didi-Huberman (2002a, p. 24-25) mentions the issue of the *end of art history*, supported by Hans Belting in *L'Histoire de l'art est-elle finie?* (1983).
- ⁴ Initially coined by Anton Springer in *Das Nachleben der Antike im Mittelalter [Middle Ages]* (1867), which marked the art historiography of 19th century, especially regarding the role of the reemergences of the ancient in Medieval and Renaissance *art*. As for the controversial translation of *Nachleben*, in Warburgian studies (Rampley, 2000, p. 33-34), which would literally be *afterlife* (Baitello Junior, 2017, p. 39), which is mainly supported by Anglo-Saxon scholars to the detriment of *posthumous life*, defended, among others, by Giorgio Agamben (1998, p. 55-56) and *survival (survivance)* in use in France, mainly in the sense of Didi-Huberman, this is adopted here, due to its philological and epistemological opening. Such controversy may be due to the mismatch between the conception of Springer, according to whom *Nachleben* would reduce Antiquity to medieval survivals in favor of the triumphant An-

tiquity of the Renaissance, whereas according to Warburg this concept would not concern a periodization, under a structural sense in which *Nachleben* of the ancient would be present both in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, as a subtrend in different styles (Didi-Huberman, 2002a, p. 84).

- ⁵ This and other explanations of Schneemann occurred through emails exchanged with Sabine Breitwieser – who also curated the artist’s eponymous retrospective at MoMa PS1, in Long Island, from October 2017 to March 2018 –, during the curatorial process of the *Kinetic Painting* exhibition, which took place at the Museum der Modern in Salzburg in 2015. It has to be questioned whether many of the interpretations of the artist may have had later elaborations on her oeuvre in a retrospective view, in addition to the perception that there could have been a certain guidance of the paths of the critique about her in several joint publications with curators and even critics of her work, for decades. Thus, it should be considered, in each case, the extent to which the artist would put herself as an interpreter of her own work over time.
- ⁶ The expression comes from a fire department procedure that, in certain circumstances, initiates a controlled fire, which always involves risks, since, in the end, fire is uncontrollable.
- ⁷ This is the case of Manoel S. Friques (2018, p. 834), evoking Susan Sontag’s *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, of 1966, regarding the notion that the intimacy of the *assemblages* and *combining paintings* with the *Happenings* in the New York School becomes evident in Schneemann’s poetics.
- ⁸ With a new change of studio, she started *Fur Wheel* (1962) and the work in question, both using engines, in addition to cuts of animal skins, tables and other materials that were used by the former tenant of the *loft*, who covered objects with fur.
- ⁹ Available at: <<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/200141>>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ¹⁰ Available _____ at: <<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e4/dd/da/e4dddaf34ece6d65cc90dc765395718b.jpg>>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ¹¹ Available at: <<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/schneemann-carolee/>>. Accessed on: Feb. 02, 2020.

- ¹² Available at: https://www.ppowgallery.com/sites/default/files/styles/work_large/public/Eye%20Body%20Contact%20Sheet.jpg. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ¹³ Schneider (2002, p. 188-189) notes that although these two movements had political marking and were more open and inclusive to female artists, in the American context, they would maintain the same cultural criteria of the appropriate/inappropriate for a female artist according to Minimal Art and Pop Art, rejecting gender marking and its codes. Her position as an *image maker* was, also, a response to this situation. She was one of the pioneers of Fluxus, she was officially excommunicated by its founder after presenting *Meat Joy* (1964). In an official note, George Maciunas justified the ban as being due to “[...] confused expressionist tendencies of this terrifying woman” (Schneider, 2002, p. 188-189). Although the ban did not take effect in the European community, even today she is not considered a *pure* Fluxus artist.
- ¹⁴ Available at: http://moussemagazine.it/app/uploads/01-carolee-schneemann_meat-joy_1964-1.jpg. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ¹⁵ The comparison with Yves Klein’s *Anthropométries* (1959–1960) is inescapable. Nonetheless, despite its importance, they ended up reinforcing the objectification of the woman’s body and image by the male artist, in a creative process that appropriates the female model as an artistic instrument, imprinting her body.
- ¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/dec/15/carolee-schneemann-kim-kardashian-raw-meat-live-sex-snakes-gorgeous-dangerous-art#img-2>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ¹⁷ Her relationship with these different artistic categories, languages or supports may be approached to Erwin Piscator’s documentary cinema, regarding the use of montage in the poetic process of intervening in the theater with cinema projections (Huapaya, 2016, p. 114).
- ¹⁸ This alleged narcissism is rooted in the rejection of the performance of female artists who took over the agency of their own bodies in art. Schneider (2002, p. 35-36) adds that Schneemann, in addition to showing her body as an active object, wanted to show *the nude as the artist*, her body as the place of her discourse, linked to the notion of her pictorial gesture in the face of that pictorial tradition.

- ¹⁹ Presented at the Women Here and Now conference. After entering a room covered by a sheet over an apron tied to her naked body, she undressed and climbed on a table, drew on her body with mud – in a ritualistic act – and mimicked poses typical of a live model drawing class. Finally, she read excerpts from her book *Cézanne, She Was a Great Painter*, and then started pulling a roll of paper from her vagina, while reading passages from her *Kitch's Last Meal* (Schneemann, 1997, p. 238-239).
- ²⁰ This and other quotations from texts in a foreign language were translated by the author.
- ²¹ Although he was interested in archeology, anthropology and ancient religions, the Scottish folklorist outlined a strongly controversial diffusionist theory from Buddhism to the American peoples, which is completely distant from Warburg's theoretical framework.
- ²² His psychiatrist, Ludwig Binswanger, had agreed with the proposal to prepare and deliver this lecture at the Bellevue Sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, where he had received treatment for his mental illness since 1921, and with which he proved the feasibility of his discharge, in 1924.
- ²³ "Schneemann's essentialism was most obvious in her goddess *imagery* – snakes placed across her body in *Eye/Body* were allusions to the Goddess. But that essentialism was tinged with declarations of her own agency – her status as constructor, artist, active creator. She upset feminists on both sides of the essentialist/materialist divide. Rigidly essentialist feminists, such as the Heresies collective in the 1960s, chastised Schneemann for debasing the Goddess with what they read as sexual narcissism in her work. Twenty years later, strictly materialist feminists similarly dismissed Schneemann's work, reading any gestures toward goddess-identified sacrality as always already nostalgic and therefore naively apolitical" (Schneider, 2002, p. 36-37).
- ²⁴ Character in the eponymous novel (1903) by the German writer, about which Sigmund Freud wrote *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva* (1907).
- ²⁵ Bataille (1979, p. 143) interpreted the borrowing of compositional schemes of works from the past by Manet, whose modern specificity differed from those of his contemporaries.
- ²⁶ On the presence of this character and the bouquet in the painting and their exclusion in *Site*, see Schneider (2002, p. 27-28).

- ²⁷ This painting was, at the time, attributed to Giorgione. Although controversial, the authorship of Tiziano Vecellio is now accepted by the Louvre Museum, to which it belongs.
- ²⁸ Based on Wayne Andersen (1973), but which became notorious through Damisch.
- ²⁹ Available at: <<https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2017/11/eyebody800.jpg>>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ³⁰ In reference to the subtitle that Warburg's article received from Ernst Gombrich, in 1937 (Latsis, 2015, p. 10).
- ³¹ It would reveal the phantasmatic work of the image, opened by the Warburgian idea that the images would conserve residual psychic energies, which would re-emerge in the History of Art, being possible to invert their polarity, relating the concept of symbol to that of engram, as observed by Giorgio Agamben (1998, p. 57), and a work cannot be understood exclusively according to the conscious will of the artist, in their creative process, beyond the strength of styles.
- ³² Available at: <<https://kunsthallewinterthur.ch/en/carolee-schneemann>>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2020.
- ³³ Also in reference to his essay "The theatrical costumes for the 'intermezzi' of 1589" (1895).
- ³⁴ In reference to the film (2013), directed by Roman Polanski, based on the play by Ives David (2010) adapted from the eponymous novel by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, from 1870.

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