

A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*

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1. The Image and the Arts: An Artificial Split

Because the meaning of the German word *Bild* includes *image*, *picture*, *figure*, and *illustration*, the term *Bildwissenschaft* has no equivalence in the English language. It seems as if this linguistic difference is deepening an ongoing distinction between English- and German-speaking art history.

In Austria and Germany the principal elements of the discipline were created around 1900 and continued to be developed until 1933. After 1970 a major revival of art history as *Bildwissenschaft* took place in German art history. Advertisements, photography, nonart mass photography, film, video, and political iconography became regular subjects. When digital and netart became feasible, they were almost immediately included within the history of art.¹ Historically, then, two essential points comprise *Bildwissenschaft*: first, art history embraced the whole field of images beyond the visual arts, and, secondly, it took all of these objects seriously.

In the English-speaking world, though, the proliferation of media has not been the only complicating factor in reaching a consensus on how *Bild-*

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1. Some significant examples, although published in later years, may be sufficient: Henriette Våth’s magnificent dissertation “*Odol: Reklame-Kunst um 1900*” (Ph.D. diss., Gießen, 1985; see also Henriette Våth-Hinz, *Odol: Reklame-Kunst um 1900* [Berlin, 1985]) on the mouthwash Odol around 1900 as a forerunner of surrealism; Bodo von Dewitz, “So wird bei uns der Krieg geführt! Amateurfotografie im ersten Weltkrieg” (Ph.D. diss., Munich, 1989) on soldiers’ photographs in World War I; Marin Warnke, “Politische Ikonographie,” in *Bildindex zur Politischen Ikonographie*, ed. Warnke (Hamburg, 1993), pp. 5–12; Edith Decker’s fundamental work on Nam June Paik, *Paik: Video* (Cologne, 1988); and Hans Dieter Huber’s historicization of the reflection of netart in art history, “Digging the Net—Materialien zu einer Geschichte der Kunst im Netz,” in *Bilder in Bewegung: Traditionen digitaler Ästhetik*, ed. Kai-Uwe Hemken (Cologne, 2000), pp. 158–74.

wissenschaft should be defined. In a very recent advertisement of the journal *Visual Studies*, we find the following statement: "The cross-disciplinary and multi-modal nature of the journal will be reflected by the coverage of anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, visual culture, symbolic interaction, documentary photography . . . , information technology, visual literacy, visual intelligence and communication studies."² Visual studies therefore is everything that the narrowest definition of art history is not.

This kind of separation of art history and visual studies in the English-speaking world has been a significant development in Germany and Austria as well, where similar efforts to establish a *Bildwissenschaft* by completely excluding art history have been undertaken. Perhaps because modern scholars have internalized this development the memory of what *Bildwissenschaft* once was is now in danger of being lost. Recently it has been argued that art history had failed as *Bildwissenschaft* because it never confronted modern media; iconology would have become a *Bildwissenschaft* if Erwin Panofsky had not encapsulated this method into an analysis of Renaissance allegory.³ Therefore, following the tradition of the nineteenth century, art history has been forced to neglect the media arts and deal only with works of "high" art.⁴

This argument, which comes from a leading art historian whose name stands for a very open-minded conceptualization of the discipline, can be taken as symptomatic. The concept of art history as *Bildwissenschaft* is obviously the object of a conscious amnesia; one has to reconstruct it and ask for the reasons for this general oblivion.

2. *Bildgeschichte* through Photography

Heinrich Dilly argued more than twenty years ago that the rise of academic art history at German universities in the nineteenth century would have been impossible without photography.⁵ It is indeed astonishing how

2. Webpage for *Visual Studies*, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/routledge/1472586X.html>

3. See Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* (Munich, 2001), p. 15.

4. See *ibid.*, p. 17.

5. See Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), p. 149. The more recent literature is given in Wiebke Ratzeburg, "Mediendiskussion im 19. Jahrhundert: Wie die Kunstgeschichte ihre wissenschaftliche Grundlage in der Fotografie fand," *Kritische Berichte* 30, no. 1 (2002): 22–39, and Ingeborg Reichle, "Medienbrüche," *Kritische Berichte* 30, no. 1 (2002): 40–56.

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early, how enthusiastically, and, at the same time, how self-consciously some of the leading art historians praised the new medium. In contrast to the rejection of photography by artists, art critics, and members of their own discipline,⁶ these scholars' work thus constituted a new perspective towards *Bildgeschichte*.

Alfred Woltmann, art historian in Karlsruhe, who tried to practice art history in a scientifically precise fashion and renamed it artscience (*Kunstwissenschaft*), enthusiastically defended photography in 1864: "Photography has partly assisted, displaced or paragonized woodcut and engraving, but it has enlarged, facilitated, and improved the tools and aims of artistic recreation infinitely."⁷ And, in 1865, nearly twenty years before world famous scientists like Robert Koch argued that "the photographic picture of a microscopic object can under certain circumstances be more important than [the object] itself,"⁸ Hermann Grimm, who would become the first full professor of art history at Berlin University in 1873, called for a collection of art historical photographs, arguing that these archives could become "today of higher importance than the greatest galleries of originals."⁹ Grimm articulates here what Erwin Panofsky later called, ironically, the "rejection of originals,"¹⁰ thus naming the basic conflict in art history: that it depends largely on the autopsy of the original but that it questions it also through the lens of photographic-founded knowledge. Wilhelm Lübke, probably the most popular art historian of the nineteenth century,¹¹ did not even see a

6. See Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848–1871* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), pp. 274–77, 292, and Dorothea Peters, "'... die Teilnahme für Kunst im Publikum zu steigern und den Geschmack zu veredeln': Fotografische Kunstproduktionen nach Werken der Berliner Nationalgalerie in der Ära Jordan (1874–1896)," in *Verwandlungen durch Licht: Fotografieren in Museen & Archiven & Bibliotheken*, ed. Landschaftsverband Rheinland und Rundbrief Fotografie (Dresden, 2000), pp. 168, 173.

7. "Die Photographie hat Holzschnitt und Kupferstich theils sekundirt, theils verdrängt, theils zum Wettkampf herausgefordert, Mittel und Aufgaben der künstlerischen Nachschöpfung aber in das unendliche erweitert, erleichtert, vervollkommenet" (Alfred Woltmann, "Die Photographie im Dienste der Kunstgeschichte," *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Politik und Literatur* 10 [1864]: 355; compare Elisabeth Ziemer, *Heinrich Gustav Hotho, 1802–1873: Ein Berliner Kunsthistoriker, Kunstkritiker, und Philosoph* [Berlin, 1994], p. 199).

8. "Das fotografische Bild eines mikroskopischen Gegenstandes ist unter Umständen für wichtiger, als diesen selbst" (Robert Koch, "Zur Untersuchung von pathogenen Organismen," *Mittheilungen aus dem kaiserlichen Gesundheitsamte* 1 [1881]: 11; see Thomas Schlich, "Die Repräsentation von Krankheitserregern: Wie Robert Koch Bakterien als Krankheitsursache dargestellt hat," in *Räume des Wissens: Repräsentation, Codierung, Spur*, ed. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Michael Hagner, and Bettina Wahrig-Schmidt [Berlin, 1997], pp. 165–90).

9. He meant the *Photoalbum* to be perhaps "wichtiger heute als die größten Gallerien von Originalen" (Herman Grimm, *Über Künstler und Kunstwerke* [Berlin, 1865], p. 38).

10. "Trotz meiner Abneigung gegen Original-Kunstwerke fand ich die Tizian-Ausstellung sehr schön" (Erwin Panofsky, letter to Fritz Saxl, Aug. 1935, *Korrespondenz 1910–1968*, ed. Dieter Wuttke, 5 vols. [Wiesbaden, 2001], 1:848).

11. See "Wilhelm Lübke," *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon: Zweihundert Porträts deutschsprachiger Autoren aus vier Jahrhunderten*, ed. Peter Bethhausen et al. (Stuttgart, 1999), p. 249.

conflict. In 1870 he saw that photography reproduced the breath of artistic originality as an immediately apprehensible sediment left over from "full animation."¹² Anton Springer, Germany's first academic full professor of art history, defended photography in media-historical terms: as bookprinting put an end only to bad calligraphers, and as calligraphers had forced bookprinting to become an art, so the manual graphic arts would not be destroyed by photography; on the contrary, photography would strengthen their artfulness. Finally, Jakob Burckhardt actually spoke of photography as a treasure of *aura*. The danger that great works would disappear and lose their power would be averted by photography.¹³

These pioneers of academic art history gave voice to the nineteenth-century belief in technically aided objectivity,¹⁴ but they recognized at the same time that photography was more than just a duplication of an object. Instead, they opened up the study of the technological act of reproduction by analyzing its autonomy. From Wölfflin's 1897 critique of photographic sculpture-reproduction¹⁵ one can draw a straight line to Panofsky's brilliant 1930 essay on the original and the facsimile. Panofsky, after starting with the confession that facsimile reproductions are neither right nor wrong but have to be judged in their own stylistic realm, comes to the conclusion that the eye has to sharpen its capacity to draw distinctions all the more as originals and reproductions seemingly become identical.¹⁶

Also, slide projection, which by 1900 had become standard in academic art history,¹⁷ was not only used as a didactic instrument but as an autopoetic guide to research. For Grimm the multiplying projection had the same analytic approach as the microscope. He valued the slide projection over the naked eye for its higher standard of representation of the artist's originality.¹⁸ How much Grimm relied on slides to construct art history as *Bild-*

12. "In voller Beseelung" (Wilhelm Lübke, "Photographien nach Gemälden des Louvre: Herausgegeben von der photographischen Gesellschaft in Berlin," *Kunst-Chronik* 5, no. 1 [1869]: 45). Compare Ratzeburg, "Mediendiskussion im 19. Jahrhundert," p. 33.

13. See Katja Amato, "Skizze und Fotografie bei Jacob Burckhardt," in *Darstellung und Deutung: Abbilder der Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Matthias Bruhn (Weimar, 2000), pp. 47–60.

14. See Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "Das Bild der Objektivität," in *Ordnungen der Sichtbarkeit: Fotografie in Wissenschaft, Kunst, und Technologie*, ed. Peter Geimer (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), p. 57.

15. See Heinrich Wölfflin, "Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll," pts. 1 and 2, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 6 and 7, n.s. (1896, 1897): 224–28, 294–97.

16. See Panofsky, "Original und Faksimilereproduktion," *Deutschsprachige Aufsätze*, ed. Karen Michels and Warnke, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1998), 2:1078–90, esp. p. 1088; compare Michael Diers, "Kunst und Reproduktion: Der Hamburger Faksimilestreit—Zum Wiederabdruck eines unbekannt gebliebenen Panofsky-Aufsatzes von 1930," *Idea* 5 (1986): 125–37, and Anna M. Eifert-Körnig, "... und sie wäre dann nicht an der Reproduktion gestorben," in *Der Photopionier Hermann Krone: Photographie und Apparatur—Bildkultur und Phototechnik im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Wolfgang Hesse and Timm Starl (Marburg, 1998), pp. 267–78.

17. See Reichle, "Medienbrüche," p. 42.

18. See Grimm, *Beiträge zur Deutschen Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin, 1897), pp. 359–60.

wissenschaft can be demonstrated by the fact that he hardly cared for books. When Heinrich Wölfflin succeeded Grimm as the chair of art history in Berlin in 1901, he found 1300 publications, but 15,000 slides.¹⁹

Using these slides, Wölfflin was able to demonstrate and at the same time reflect upon his bipolar *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* through his magical style of double projections. By developing his categories from examples of high art, Wölfflin meant them to be helpful in understanding the visual culture of whole epochs in the broadest sense. He never used the term *Bildgeschichte*, but he did call art history the “development of modern seeing,” which is in fact a broader and deeper concept.²⁰

Grimm, Lübke, Springer, Burckhardt, Wölfflin, and Panofsky come together in that they include photographs and slides inside the circle of the estimation of originals and that they value projections as research tools of the highest order. Through the use of a mass of reproductions and slides they all tried to underline and strengthen the aura of the reproduction and at the same time increase the number of objects of study to develop new levels of art historical tools in agreement with statistical methods. In enlarging the circle of art history’s estimation of reproduction media, they changed art history profoundly towards *Bildwissenschaft*.

3. From Photography to Mass Media

Photography was of course not only taken as a subject but also as an object of research. Alfred Lichtwark, director of the Hamburgian Kunsthalle, supported both artful and amateurish photography. His proposal to collect in both directions has been followed by the Hamburg Museum of Arts and Crafts since 1897.²¹ Through this concept of embracing not only artful photography but also daily life snapshots, art history had become a *Bildwissenschaft* in the full sense of being dedicated both to the arts and to nonart images.

During the First World War, films, postcards, posters, and the illustrated press created an unparalleled concentration of the visual media; in 1917 the head of the German army, General Ludendorff, ordered 700 cinemas to be built along the frontlines, as “the war has demonstrated the overwhelming power of images and the film as a form of reconnaissance and influence.”²² In a strange coincidence, in the same year Aby Warburg

19. See Reichle, “Medienbrüche,” p. 50.

20. “Entwicklung des modernen Sehens” (Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* [Basel, 1991], p. 23).

21. See Alfred Lichtwark, *Die Bedeutung der Amateur-Photographie* (Halle, 1894), and Ulrich Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” *History of Photography* 8, no. 4 (1984): 252.

22. Quoted in Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter*, p. 129. The German reads: “Der Krieg hat die überragende Macht von Bild und Film als Aufklärungs- und Beeinflussungsmittel gezeigt” (Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* [Berlin, 1986], p. 197).

collected and analyzed the whole *Bildmaterial*, expanding Lichtwark's methodology. It was an almost obsessive trial to take part in the war through its images. Consequently, Warburg defined himself as a "picture-historian, but not as an art historian."²³

But the opposition turned into a marriage. In reaction to the propaganda of the First World War, Warburg worked on the "picture press campaigns" during the Reformation;²⁴ "the horror-fantasy of the ongoing war will be inconceivable without a picture-historical analysis of the belief in monsters."²⁵ In the introduction of his article Warburg argued that art history could fulfil its responsibility for the arts only by enlarging the field to include "images in the broadest sense."²⁶

This article became the founding text not only for political iconography but also for the history of visual media. Its methodology led to the conception of art history as a "laboratory of cultural-scientific picture-history."²⁷ "Each day," Warburg wrote again in 1917, "turns me more and more into a historian of the image."²⁸ Not only Warburg's snake ritual essay but also, of course, his typologies of stamps demonstrate the concreteness of his approach.²⁹ Warburg strongly emphasized the value of a picture beyond the limits of the arts; they were, for him, the "nervous organs of perception of the contemporary internal and external life."³⁰

The *Bilderatlas "Mnemosyne"* shows the product of Warburg's concept of art history as *Bildwissenschaft* or, as he wrote in 1925–26, "across the work-of-art-history towards a science of pictorial shape" as its final goal.³¹ To give

23. "Sagte zu ihm: ich sei Bildhistoriker, kein Kunsthistoriker" (Diers, *Warburg aus Briefen: Kommentare zu den Kopierbüchern der Jahre 1905-1918* [Weinheim, 1991], p. 230 n. 142).

24. "Bilderpressefeldzüge" (Diers, *Schlagbilder: Zur politischen Ikonographie der Gegenwart* [Frankfurt am Main, 1997], p. 28; hereafter abbreviated S).

25. "Denn ganz abgesehen von dem Stück Aufhellung über Luther und seine Zeit, ist und bleibt ohne eine bildgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Monstra-Glaubens die Funktion der Greuelphantasie im jetzigen Kriege unfaßbar" (S, p. 29).

26. "Bilder . . . im weitesten Sinn" (Aby Warburg, "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten," *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, ed. Horst Bredekamp and Diers, 2 vols. [Berlin, 1998], 2:490).

27. "Laboratorium kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildgeschichte" (*ibid.*, 2:535); this is misleadingly translated in the English version as "laboratory of the iconological science of civilisation" (Warburg, "Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther," *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt [Los Angeles, 1999], p. 651).

28. "Jeder Tag' . . . macht mich mehr und mehr zum Bildgeschichtler" (S, p. 31).

29. See Ulrich Raulff, "Idea Victrix—Warburg und die Briefmarke," *Vorträge aus dem Warburg-Haus*, ed. Wolfgang Kemp et al. (Berlin, 2002), 6:1–36.

30. "Nervöse Auffangsorgane des zeitgenössischen inneren und äußeren Lebens" (Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* [Berlin, 1981], p. 355).

31. "Ueber die Kunstwerkgeschichte zur Wissenschaft von der bildhaften Gestaltung" (S, p. 48 n. 34). See Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas "Mnemosyne"*, ed. Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink (Berlin, 2000); this is the official edition. Georges Didi-Huberman has recently given a new interpretation of its interaction with the contemporary media and avant-garde; see Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante: Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris, 2002).

one example, which has been analysed recently by Charlotte Schoell-Glass: the last plate compiles scenes of eucharistic sacraments, sacrifices, and self-sacrifices like the harakiri-sheet on top of the middle column.³² The center of this stripe is filled by scenes of the concordat between Mussolini and Pope Pius XI in July 1929, which Warburg witnessed in Rome. He contrasted the abandonment of the Church's authority over Rome with the brutish appearance of the fascists in a confident act of the highest symbolic order.

Especially telling is the presentation of a sheet of the 29 July edition of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*. An image shows the pope during the procession. This photograph is juxtaposed with pictures of a Japanese golfer, a group of other golfers, a golf champion, the mayor, a French harbor commission, a rowing race, a students' convent, young people departing for England, a famous swimmer, and two race horses. The craziness of this mixture was a product of a revolution in the daily press that had taken place in the twenties in Berlin. Images overtook the textual space without any coherency, turning each gaze into journals like the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* into a dadaistic event. The images were chosen less for their sense and more for their formal aspects.³³

Significantly, Warburg did not cut out the photograph of the pope but pinned up the whole, crazy quilt sheet. He wanted to find a sense even in what he characterized as a "salad of pictures" (*Bildersalat*). All the scenes apart from that of the pope are "self-confident representations of human excellencies" (*selbstzufriedene Schaustellungen menschlicher Vortrefflichkeit*), and the sportsmen are "competing dynamics" (*wettstreitende Dynamiker*) in a sphere of "mundane content" (*zufriedene Diesseitigkeit*). The images constitute an antagonistic pole in relation to the pope giving up his worldly reign. But although occupying the most space within the image, the procession is overlapped by the swimmer, thus overshadowing the "hoc est corpus meum" through his ostentatious "hoc meum corpus est." The dialectical tension thus turns into a "barbaric lack of style" (*barbarischen Stillosigkeit*).³⁴ As Warburg takes a seemingly banal photograph as seriously as a fresco by Raphael, he represents the essence of art history as *Bildwissenschaft*, which claimed to invest an unhindered energy in even the seemingly marginal and worthless.

32. See Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "Aby Warburg's Late Comments on Symbol and Ritual," *Science in Context* 12, no. 4 (1999): 621–42.

33. See Kurt Korff, "Die Berliner Illustrierte," *Ullstein: 50 Jahre, 1877-1927* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 290–92.

34. Warburg, *Mnemosyne-Atlas, Begleittexte zur Ausstellung Aby Warburg-Mnemosyne, Akademie der bildenden Künste* (Wien, 1993), pl. 79, p. 2.

4. Film and *Bildwissenschaft*

Warburg's groundbreaking Schifanoja lecture from 1912 ended with the confession that he had only been able to perform a "cinematographic projection."³⁵ It was apparently more than a *captatio benevolentiae*.³⁶ Franz Wickhoff's analysis of *Vienna Genesis* from 1895 had attempted already to project the cinematographic gaze back into the history of art. Sergey Eisenstein at least saw *Vienna Genesis* as a paradigmatic study of running action and as an essential impulse for the training of his film eyes.³⁷

Victor Schamoni's 1926 art historical dissertation on "the possibilities of the absolute film," which he did with Martin Wackernagel in Münster,³⁸ developed a theory of the film by using similar categories of ornament, movement, and synaesthetics. His central term is *rhythm*, which he transfers from architectural structures to film sequences.

But nobody saw more cinematographic rhythms than Panofsky. He was a film maniac, and the only thing he objected to on his first trip to New York in 1931 was that "the cinemas are extremely lousy."³⁹ In a long review article on Dürer in which he too judged Wickhoff's *Vienna Genesis* to be a "cinematographic split up,"⁴⁰ he saw in some of Dürer's works "cinematographic" sequences.⁴¹ And in a glowing letter from 1932 Panofsky compared Greta Garbo to Dürer; in the silent movies she had developed a style "which relates to the regular art of acting as graphics to painting." By limiting herself to silent movies she had established an autonomous style similar to Dürer's mastership in copperplate print. But when she talked she acted, according to Panofsky, like a watercolored etching done by Rembrandt.⁴²

The letter sounds as if Panofsky had his book on Dürer already in mind,

35. "Kinematographisch scheinwerfern" (Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike*, 2:478).

36. On Warburg and "the image in motion," see Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement* (Paris, 1998), p. 79.

37. See Sergey Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (1942; London, 1986), p. 148; Werner Hofmann, "Alles hängt mit allem zusammen," *Eisenstein und Deutschland: Texte Dokumente Briefe*, ed. Akademie der Künste (Berlin, 1998), p. 205; and Karl Clausberg, "Wiener Schule—Russischer Formalismus—Prager Strukturalismus: Ein komparatistisches Kapitel Kunstwissenschaft," *Idea 2* (1983): 152, 174.

38. See Victor Schamoni, "Das Lichtspiel: Möglichkeiten des absoluten Films" (Ph.D. diss., Münster, 1926).

39. "Kinos sind unter allem Hund, worüber alle besseren Menschen sehr unglücklich sind" (Panofsky, letter to Dora Panofsky, 14 Oct. 1931, *Korrespondenz*, 1:401).

40. "Kinematographisch zerlegende' Darstellungsverfahren" (Panofsky, "Albrecht Dürers rhythmische Kunst," *Deutschsprachige Aufsätze*, 1:400).

41. "Durch eine Zerlegung des Bewegungsablaufs in mehrere kinematographisch aufeinanderfolgende Einzelphasen" (*ibid.*; see also 1:402, 403 n. 26).

42. Panofsky, letter to Dora Panofsky, 9 Jan. 1932, *Korrespondenz*, 1:470.

which he published eleven years later. He compared Dürer's workshop with Walt Disney's atelier,⁴³ and he even analyzed the portraits according to cinematographic categories,⁴⁴ confirming to his friend Siegfried Kracauer "that we both learned something from the movies!"⁴⁵ The same is true of the Leonardesque *Codex Huygens*, in which Panofsky saw not only the "kinetic possibilities" but also the "'cinematographic' representation" and the preformation of "the modern cinema."⁴⁶

5. "On Movies"

Panofsky's "On Movies" was published within the same time frame as these observations.⁴⁷ With this essay we touch on the unwritten history of art history as *Bildwissenschaft* in the U.S.

Alfred Barr, the young, newly designated director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, travelled to the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, and Germany, where he got strongly favorable impressions of the Bauhaus: "A fabulous institution . . . , painting, graphic arts, architecture, the crafts, typography, theater, cinema, photography, industrial design for mass production—all were studied and taught together in a large new modern building."⁴⁸ This experience, as is well known, became the model of the MOMA and its founding of the film library in 1935,⁴⁹ which later would be called the

43. See Panofsky, *Das Leben und die Kunst Albrecht Dürers* (1943; Munich, 1977), pp. 35–36. See also Siegfried Kracauer and Erwin Panofsky, *Briefwechsel, 1941–1966*, ed. Volker Breidecker (Berlin, 1996), p. 204.

44. See Panofsky, *Das Leben und die Kunst Albrecht Dürers*, p. 281.

45. "Das kommt daher, daß wir beide etwas von den Movies gelernt haben!" (Panofsky, letter to Kracauer, 23 Dec. 1943, in Panofsky and Kracauer, *Briefwechsel, 1941–1966*, p. 27).

46. Panofsky, *The "Codex Huygens" and Leonardo da Vinci's Art Theory* (London, 1940), pp. 24, 27, 128; see also pp. 29 and 123.

47. Irving Lavin, "Panofskys Humor," in Panofsky, "Die ideologischen Vorläufer des Rolls-Royce-Kühlers" und "Stil und Medium im Film" (Frankfurt, 1993), pp. 9–15; pp. 9–13 gives an inspired analysis of the new American style of Panofsky's piece. "On Movies" was the original title of Panofsky's "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures." See Panofsky, *Three Essays on Style*, ed. Lavin (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 91–128; Lavin's "Panofskys Humor" appears in expanded form as that collection's introduction.

48. Sam Hunter, introduction, *The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection* (New York, 1984), p. 11.

49. Barr himself proposed as first director Gustav Hartlaub, head of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, a specialist in the Renaissance, who at the same time had brought the avant-garde into the museum, who had created the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and against whom the campaign of *degenerate art* was directed for the first time; see Kracauer and Panofsky, *Briefwechsel, 1941–1966*, p. 211 n. 531. As Barr remembered, the museum was organized in the first two decades according to the model of the German *Kunstvereine*. The *Kunstvereine* were interested in and open to all levels and aspects of visual culture; already in 1839 a number of them had arranged exhibitions on photography; see Ulrich Pohlmann, "'Harmonie zwischen Kunst und Industrie': Zur Geschichte der ersten Photoausstellungen (1839–1868)," in *Silber und Salz: Zur Frühzeit der Photographie im deutschen Sprachraum 1839–1860* (exhibition catalog, Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle, Cologne, 9 June–23 July 1989), p. 498.

Vatican of film history. It was strongly supported by Panofsky. In a letter from early 1936 he declared his lecture "On Movies" a support for MOMA's film collection: films "are at least as worthy of being collected as pictures and books; I even became a member of the Advisory Committee for this film collection," which he continued ironically, "does not exclude that on a minor level I am still interested in art history."⁵⁰ Given Panofsky's enthusiasm for film and MOMA's film library, one understands why in his film essay he defined cinema as the only relevant art of modernity.

At almost exactly the same time that Panofsky wrote his essay, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproduction" was published in New York in its French version.⁵¹ Nobody, as far as I know, has ever touched on this coincidence nor on the fact that Jay Leyda, a collaborator of Eisenstein and the new curator of the MOMA film library, asked for the German version of Benjamin's article so he could publish an English translation under the auspices of the film library. Horkheimer, disgusted by the article, hindered the plan in full panic, as did Adorno in 1938 when Meyer Shapiro also asked for the German ur-text.⁵²

There is no direct evidence known, but it seems possible, if not certain, that Panofsky got to know Benjamin's text through the MOMA film library. They knew each other; Benjamin wanted to collaborate with the Warburg Library in Hamburg, and, although he could not succeed, Panofsky respected his *Trauerspiel*-book.⁵³ Benjamin maintained his admiration of Panofsky; when he had to defend his article in June 1935 in Paris, he prepared himself by rereading Panofsky's article on perspective.⁵⁴

The reception of Benjamin's article was more or less nonexistent before the sixties; its fame came as a politically correct answer to McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. The only significant reaction, in my view, was Panofsky's second, enlarged edition of his "On Movies" in 1947. In this text he strengthened everything that Benjamin had denied. Even the slogan of the "magic of the multiplying arts,"⁵⁵ which Panofsky had put forward in the Dürer

50. "Ich bin sogar Mitglied des Advisory Committee für diese Film-Sammlung, was aber nicht ausschließt, daß ich mich in mäßigem Umfang immer noch für Kunstgeschichte interessiere" (Panofsky, letter to Saxl, 25 Mar. 1936, *Korrespondenz*, 1:893).

51. See Walter Benjamin, "L'Oeuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée," trans. Pierre Klossowski, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 5, no. 1 (1936): 40–68.

52. See Rolf Tiedeman and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, "Anmerkungen der Herausgeber," in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Tiedeman and Schweppenhäuser, 7 vols. in 14 (Frankfurt am Main, 1972–1989), 1:3:1029, 1030.

53. See Hugo von Hofmannsthal, letter to Panofsky, 12 Dec. 1927, *Korrespondenz*, 1:246; see also Gerhard Scholem, letter to Saxl, 24 May 1928, *Korrespondenz*, 1:276; Saxl, letter to Scholem, 17 June 1928, *Korrespondenz*, 1:286; and Panofsky, letter to Saxl, *Korrespondenz*, 1:289.

54. See Tiedeman and Schweppenhäuser, "Anmerkungen der Herausgeber," 1:3:1050 and "Anmerkungen der Herausgeber," *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7:2:679.

55. Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1943), 1:45.

book, can be seen as an affront to Benjamin's theses about the loss of aura through reproduction.

Nevertheless both are united in the long-established media-historical approach to art history as *Bildgeschichte* and thus agree that film, like the visual arts before, has to do with questions of life and death. Benjamin focuses on "shock,"⁵⁶ whereas Panofsky nominates four essential elements of film as folk art: horror, pornography, humor, and a clear-cut moral.⁵⁷

6. *Bildwissenschaft* and Visual Studies

Art history as *Bildwissenschaft*, never excluding seemingly low art objects from its field of research, has been influential for Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory, to name just two general fields of study.⁵⁸ Of course it was never forgotten in art history; Giulio Carlo Argan spoke in favor of art historians as *Bildhistoriker*, which Ernst Gombrich's work, reaching from studies of Renaissance iconology to *Art and Illusion*, represented in its full sense.

But to come back to the problem mentioned at the beginning of this essay: although in the English-speaking world there are of course many art historians like David Freedberg who represent art history as *Bildwissenschaft*, one has the impression that, for example, Barbara Stafford and James Elkins are perceived not as regular art historians any more, but as heretical "visual studysists"⁵⁹ and that W. J. T. Mitchell is seen not as a builder, but as a burner of bridges.⁶⁰ This kind of camp thinking is disastrous for both sides—and for art history on both sides of the Atlantic. The separation of visual studies from art history and the retreat of the more conservative members of this discipline onto precious little islands would put an end to art history as *Bildgeschichte*. Seen through the lens of, say, 1930, the success of the turn to the visual in our epoch seems to depend on whether art history projects its precision of description, its formal and contextual analysis towards all fields of historical *Bildwissenschaft* or if it turns itself into a splendid second archaeology.

56. Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (third version), *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7:1:379 n. 16.

57. See Breidecker, "'Ferne Nähe': Kracauer, Panofsky, und 'the Warburg tradition,'" in Kracauer and Panofsky, *Briefwechsel, 1941–1966*, p. 197.

58. See Bredekamp, "Words, Images, Ellipses," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968)*, ed. Lavin (Princeton, N.J., 1995), pp. 363–71.

59. Compare Katerina Duskova's review of several of Elkins's works in *The Art Bulletin* 84 (Mar. 2002): 188.

60. Mitchell attacks the false originality of visual studies as a narrow encapsulation of art. See W. J. T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Williamstown, Mass., 2002), pp. 231–50.