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a cura di
Ada Naval, Ianick Takaes, Giulia Zanon

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Engramma
Via F. Baracca 39 | 30173 Mestre
edizioni@engramma.it

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+39 041 257 14 61

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Sommario

The Exuberant Excess of His Subjective Propensities

Translating Edgar Wind's Art and Anarchy (1963) into Portuguese

Ianick Takaes

We present here the Portuguese translation of Edgar Wind's seminal volume, *Art and Anarchy* (1963). Published by Edunicamp in March 2025, the edition has been overseen by Ianick Takaes and Patrícia Dalcanale Menesis, with translation, introduction, and critical apparatus provided by Ianick Takaes. In his introductory contribution, Takaes not only contextualises Wind's work but also reflects upon his own trajectory of research within the Warburgian tradition in the Ibero-American sphere, thereby tracing an intellectual itinerary in which the Windian—and, more broadly, Warburgian—legacy enters into dialogue with his personal scholarly experience.

Summary of the Volume

EDGAR WIND

ARTE E ANARQUIA

ORGANIZAÇÃO
IANICK TAKAES
PATRÍCIA DALCANALE MENESES

TRADUÇÃO, INTRODUÇÃO À EDIÇÃO BRASILEIRA E NOTAS
IANICK TAKAES

EDITORA UNICAMP

I have written this piece because Maurizio Ghelardi asked me to.

Now, you might like the man—as many do; you might dislike the man—as some do; you might know of his name—cue all the things he did for Burckhardt, Warburg, and others; or you might simply not know him or of him at all—and that is your loss. When we first met in 2016 at a restaurant in my hometown of São Paulo, Brazil, I was terrified.

Back then, I was a greenhorn in art history, art theory, art historiography, and aesthetics. That is, I knew very little of what is entailed in these fancy disciplines that we came up with to square what people did, thought, rethought, and thought yet again about human-made stuff that is neither here nor there—neither magic formulas, nor mathematical equations. And when I first sat down with Ghelardi almost a decade ago to ask for his thoughts on Edgar Wind, he made me glean strange phenomena that none of my mentors had ever told me about.

"We're not talking about small 'culture' here", he growled from across the table in his raspy, operatic Italian, "but big 'Culture', the dream before the dream; we're talking about the quality of the human being from the perspective of someone who saw the worst of it from exile; we're talking about why Wind decided to abandon the philosophy of science of his youth to spend a lifetime dealing with Titian, Bellini, and Michelangelo". That's more or less what he told me then, and it took me a few years to begin to grasp what he was getting at. But after I defended my MA thesis, he told me something else: *se puoi crescere, cresci*. Meaning that if you have the chance to grow intellectually, then you must seize it, no holds barred, no excuses given. At the time, his saying so felt like a blessing. Throughout the years, it started feeling like a curse. Now it feels like what it is—like life itself.

And life is exactly what happened in the intervening years between that second conversation in October 2017 and the publication of the annotated Portuguese translation of Edgar Wind's Art and Anarchy, *Arte e anarquia*, published by Edunicamp in March of 2025 (the book that I am supposed to be presenting here). For one, I got an idea of how Wind must have felt when observing from London the political downfall of his native Germany in the 1930s. I remember the rage, guilt, and hopelessness when in late 2018, having just arrived in New York to start my PhD at Columbia University, I saw from abroad my native Brazil fall prey to its worst instincts by electing Jair Messias Bolsonaro as the president.

By watching tragedies unfold from afar, many things that Wind touches upon in his book became much clearer. For one, he kept on insisting that artistic censors have their wits about them in at least one respect: they fear what they try to censure and that fear is proof enough that art has power. Hence, Brazilian moral guardians, mostly right-wing and evangelical, tried to curb songs denouncing racial injustice, plays queering religious figures, and nudity in paintings or performances. And in doing so, they also made it plain for all to see the repression that mortifies their bodies and corrupts their fantasies. But Wind also knew that great art emerges from a risky wager between public, patrons, and artists; the greater the social friction, the greater the results tend to be. And the reader might want to take a good look at the recent output of

Brazilian Indigenous artists—such as the late Jaider Esbell or his fellow artist, Denilson Baniwa—and decide for yourself if they, the survivors of centuries of colonial violence, rose up to the occasion. They might even have done so iconographically. In *Resistência* (2017–2019), Sallisa Rosa photographed the machetes of relatives and friends, tools used in agricultural labor but also in the fight for land rights and ethnic pluralism. The work resonates with several moments in Brazilian history, but especially with the defiance of Tuíre Kayapó, an Indigenous environmental activist. In 1989, she brandished such a blade in the face of a government official in protest against the construction of the Belo Monte dam, which would displace local communities and cause much ecological devastation. The photo of this moment punctures its viewer with fear, rage, and indignation.

By processing similar emotions as I gave the final touches on my translation of *Art and Anarchy*, I became more and more attuned to that which scholars dread and intellectuals foster. There is a lot of anger in the book. It is velvet gloved, but it is there. See, for example, the denunciation of those who want to hack life for the sake of efficiency, the "knights of the razor" who, by cutting so much, will end up cutting our own feet. There is great sadness as well, as in the desire to appreciate Wagner and Rilke, but finding it impossible, not with a conscience weighed by six million Jews killed by those who idolized the composer and the poet. One also finds in the book a pinch of humor, but I have written about it elsewhere. And, surprisingly, there is a modicum of optimism in it—the hope against hope that art will be powerful again, that it will once more inspire fear and awe in the hearts of the crowds and, in doing so, carve them bit by bit into semi-decent human beings. Now, I am not sure whether translators, if they wish to be good at what they do, ought to go through an emotional rollercoaster similar to that of the writer. But while searching the thesaurus for the right words or googling this or that scholar or artist for a footnote, I did translate the thing by transubstantiating my anger, sadness, mirth, and hopefulness into sentences, paragraphs, pages, and chapters.

* * *

Speaking of emotions—I know I have disappointed Ghelardi in so many ways over the years. For one thing, I did not accept the offer of the PhD programs that he thought would be best for me. Even worse, I did not build on my growing expertise to continue exploring what some dead white guys, mostly German, said and wrote about what some even deader white guys, mostly Italian, did and thought when modernity was still in its cradle. And while I do not expect him to ever stop reminding me that I should have done this or that, I am sure he understands that a good disciple must betray his mentor at some point. In any case, my betrayal stems from one of his pieces of advice.

Before I left Pisa for Oxford in October 2016, where I was to spend two months going through Wind's archive, Ghelardi sat down with me in a café in Via Corsica and launched into one of his counseling rants: "More important than looking at this or that piece of paper in the archive is that you go about, senses wide open, trying to understand why Wind said what he said to a British audience sixty-odd years ago". After one of his dramatic pauses, chin up high and eyes

almost shut in search of a memory or a feeling, he went on. “What is important is that you absorb the smell of the place”. The man had a point. After hours spent reading on a rainy day, I sometimes smell on myself that bookish, tea-with-cookies Oxonian must.

Anyhow, this whole scent thing got me thinking about Wind’s career. Considering the many places where he lived, his must have been a prismatic redolence. Much more than most of his colleagues, his intellectual iter can only be understood by taking into account the constant travelling imposed on him by the circumstances of his life. He never went into that one big trip that would drastically alter his take on things, like Warburg did; never held the kind of cushioned jobs that Panofsky was able to procure for himself; and never worked for ages as the pedestaled director of a research institute, as was Gombrich’s ambition. In fact, the only time that Wind stayed put for more than a decade was in the last leg of his life, when he settled as the first Chair of Art History at Oxford from 1955 to 1967, having died from leukemia four years later, in 1971.

Before this final period, he was always here and there. Now in his native Berlin, then in Munich, Marburg, Freiburg, and Vienna before packing to Hamburg to complete his dissertation. Hit by the German economic crisis of the early 1920s, off he goes to teach philosophy in North Carolina, which he eventually leaves for Prohibition-era New York, where he could be found driving decoy cars for bootleggers to make ends meet. In 1927, he’s back in Hamburg, but for a short spell only, for in 1933 he relocates to London with the KBW (a story that has been told and re-told so many times that I am surprised no one has not done a movie about it yet). In 1939, what should be a short teaching sojourn of a few months in the United States turns into more than a decade when war explodes in Europe. Thus, marooned on the other side of the Atlantic, Wind crisscrosses the country as a kind of Warburgian apostle—as he put it in a letter to Fritz Saxl in 1943, he is “propagating the faith” in his lone cowboy attempt to gather US–American support, political and economic, in case the KBW has to move again. He stays in the country for years, first with a tenuous position at the University of Chicago, then in a golden-caged professorship at the Smith College, from which he flees in 1955 to go back to the UK. This peripatetic, diasporic existence took a heavy toll. One can glean at this burden by going through his archive at the Weston Library. There you can find, for example, a letter from 1995 by Wind’s widow, Margaret. Reminiscing her late husband, she states that in all this to and fro, time was always running out on him. Eventually, it went out of sight completely before he could finish his big books on Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo. “The complexities of his life”, she wrote, “are not understood”.

Then again, Margaret was constantly concerned about the intellectual standing of her beloved ghost. She would sometimes lash out, having once scribbled that Panofsky and Haskell were “third-rate people” who were “JEALOUS” of her husband (her capitals). And sometimes she would ask Wind’s former colleagues to evaluate his work, which his detractors attacked as “largely fantasy”, as did Charles Hope. The best of these reassurances came from the Italian scholar Lorenzo Minio-Paluello. On March 15, 1997, he wrote to Margaret that while her hu-

sband's interpretation could be bold, it was "the audacity of one who can embrace with his own experience of life something of the experience of life of poets and painters and sculptors and philosophers". And here is where Wind's vagabond aura might have worked in his favor. After all, in the opening lines of *Art and Anarchy*, listeners (and later, readers) were told that "a certain amount of turmoil and confusion is likely to call forth creative energies". And as he starts probing into the will-to-art of guys like Michelangelo, Spenser, Mozart, and Vollard, one might wonder if his unique insight into their "uneasy lives" does not derive from his own quite unquiet existence—from the hassle of packing his Hanseatic life to escape the Nazis across the English Channel, then packing once more to cross the Atlantic aboard the ill-fated SS Normandie, and then packing and repacking God knows how many times as he crisscrossed the United States while London burned (and, with it, much of his own papers).

I like to think so. And I also like to think that that was partially the point of Ghelardi's lesson. That being said, no matter how constant and extensive Wind's travels were, they remained confined to that part of the world that we like to call the West. Yes, his aura gave off North Atlantic urbanity because he had seen and lived in much of Central and Western Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and North America. But that was it. Hence, despite being born Argentinian in the eyes of the German authorities due to his father's citizenship, he never set foot in South America (his older sister, Felicie, might have ended her days on the continent, but that's another story). Which means that, having been to Rome several times and written extensively on the paintings in the Vatican, Wind never visited Potosí in Bolivia, for example. Thus, he was never confronted by the fact that many of the beauties that he admired in the Eternal City had been paid for by the blood silver from Cerro Rico. Or, as the Potosiños still say to this day, *un puente de plata a Madrid, un puente de huesos a Potosí* ("a bridge of silver to Madrid, a bridge of bones back to Potosí"). And as much of a keen observer of twentieth-century malaises as he was—see his upbraiding of the nascent neoliberal, technocratic individual in *Art and the Will*, the last chapter of *Art and Anarchy*—his are faulty analyses because they do not take into account the exploitative engine that funded Renaissance splendor and powered modern alienation. The scholar who so brilliantly identified pagan phantoms in early modern Italian art was somehow blind to the colonial specter haunting Europe's museum walls.

A part of me would like to have read a Wind who had once felt a dry breeze blow by in the Uyuni salt desert, heard those heavy raindrops falling onto the canopies of the Atlantic Forest, or seen the luscious green that covers chilly Ushuaia. This is all wishful thinking, of course, a bit of self-projective fault-finding in hero worship. But in this counterfactual I see the gist of what Ghelardi has taught me, this Exu of an Italian historian who always speaks about the importance of traversing landscapes and talking to their people. In doing so, he instilled in me a scholarly ideal that we can sum up as "some good books and a pair of shoes". The former marked, highlighted, and worn out, every bit of wisdom flowing like ink from their pages into myriad mental maps; the latter bruised from many a land, dirtied by city and country, shaped and shaper in covering terrains known and remote.

* * *

It was in this style of academic vagabondage that I found myself covering 400 kilometers by bus, van, and feet in southern Peru in the summer of 2024. I had traveled from Puno, in the northwestern shores of Lake Titicaca, all the way to Cabanaconde, a hard-to-reach district near the breathtaking Colca Canyon in the region of Arequipa. The goal of my trip was to visit the church of San Pedro de Alcántara, which supposedly housed a painting that I wanted to see and document, a colonial-era Last Judgment painted after a 1606 print by the French engraver Philippe Thomassin. The only known photograph of this Peruvian canvas is a blurry, black-and-white reproduction published by Francisco Stastny in 1994, hence I was very much hoping to see it in person. Unfortunately, it had been stolen about twenty years ago, around 2004, or so the parish staff told me when I came knocking.

As I despaired about not being able to see the thing, I started speaking to this woman, Carmen. She also had been trying to contact the local priest, but in her case to check on some birth certificates. Although she now lived in the outskirts of Lima, she had been born in this remote town in the 1970s and remembered well the large *Juicio Final* that used to grace the church's east transept. "When I was a child, I knew how to speak *castellano* because my mom had taught me", she told me in Spanish with a hint of pride, "but many, many people back then spoke only Quechua, so the priest would teach them about the dogmas by pointing at that image…". I interjected, asking for confirmation that she was indeed referring to a painting of the Last Judgment—that is, to the painting that I was looking for. "Yes! Yes, yes", she nodded in excited impatience and hurried on, "So, he'd point to that image so that folks would understand that if you do this and that, you'll go suffer in Hell, and that if you don't do this and that, you'll get enjoy Heaven". Carmen then reminisced about her childhood initiation into Catholicism. She stressed that, having always had a knack for languages, her memory retained a hymn to the Virgin Mary in Quechua, Spanish, Latin, and Italian. And she sang them to me. She did it timidly at first, but beautifully at the end.

On the next day, I took a bus ride back to Chivay through the AR-109, a road well-known to the many tourists hoping to spot a canyon-gliding condor. Looking through the window as I watched the majestic vistas pass us by, I went back in my mind to a time of dirt pathways, when Franciscan missionaries had to cross hundreds of kilometers on foot while mules trotted along carrying their proselytizing paraphernalia. And as I did so, I started reflecting on what Carmen had told me while my historical imagination attempted to connect the dots. For the otherness of the Andeans vis–à-vis the Europeans once manifested itself through lakes and rivers, across prairies and mountains, and even from the telluric worlds of caves and volcanoes all the way up to the sky-bound realms of clouds and stars. And in the *huacas* that dotted and mythologized this land—the revered objects, monuments, mummies, and geological features once essential to the interconnection between worlds profane and sacred—the Spanish saw but embodiments of demonic forces to be tamed, feared, and extirpated. Their own idols, so they argued, were of a different nature, mere metaphysical relays wired to the numinous th-

rough rituals and prayer. The issue at heart, therefore, was one of imagination and power, of what normative notions and practices should mediate the sensible and suprasensible apprehension of one's surroundings—a decision that would have enormous environmental costs.

A few months later, now far away in residency at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California, I finished editing the Portuguese edition of *Art and Anarchy*. As I did so, I had to wrestle with an angel: Why the hell were we publishing this book to a Lusophone readership in this day and age? The ready-made answers in my mind were several—and all a bit self-serving: "I've worked so much on this"; "it would look good on my CV"; "people have been telling me to be done with it for ages"; and so on. The solution to the conundrum, it seems, was in Wind himself. He would sometimes characterize his book as *vieux jeu*, feigning surprise that people were so taken aback by his criticisms, since these, in his mind, went back to past bigwigs like Baudelaire, Burckhardt, Goethe, and Plato.

Thus, Wind kept on hammering home a few points that resonated back then, when he broadcast *Art and Anarchy* as the BBC Reith Lectures of 1960, and which I thought could resonate now, sixty-five years later and across the Atlantic. First, outbreaks of artistic excellence usually happen in tandem with the political disintegration of nations, and contemporary Brazil seemed to me prey to this odd historical recurrence. Second, William James's "knights of the razor", whom the philosopher had judged merely a sect in his lifetime, had become in Wind's age the majority, and their direct descendants—Silicon Valley tech-bros and a host of corporate entrepreneurs, big and minor—now rule over most aspects of our lives with their apps and metrics-is-all mentality. Third, art is dangerous, and if it doesn't seem so now, it might be so again in the future and it was certainly so in the past, as revealed by even a cursory understanding of the artistic tradition of the colonial Americas. These three big ideas, which are some of the book's core arguments, seemed to justify its publication in Portuguese in 2025.

And it was also because of them, especially the third, that I decided to abandon Wind and twentieth-century art historiography to study the early modern circulation of afterlife imagery between Europe and the Iberian Americas. For when I was conceiving my PhD prospectus back in 2021, the most dangerous idea-image that I could think of, the one that has apparently caused the most hurt and destruction, was that of Heaven. In thinking that, I was in good company. In the conclusion to his seminal *Birth of Purgatory*, Jacques Le Goff admits that, having spent so much time studying the middle realm, the "real energizing and organizing force" of the whole afterlife system was the Celestial Paradise and the hopes of salvation herein inscribed. And had these hopes remained confined to Dante's *Commedia*, Bosch's *Ascent of the Blessed*, church rituals, screeching priests, and the occasional gore fest whenever a given group did not agree with another's ideas about what exactly lies up there and how to achieve it, then Heaven would have remained fine—more or less.

But following the Columbian Exchange and, later on, the rise of the Baconian creed, things took a much darker turn. The colonial process and the series of large-scale tragedies that ensued—the eco-, geno-, and epistemicide in non-European lands—meant the unprecedented,

pell-mell suppression of panpsychic and panentheistic perspectives in favor of a monotheistic worldview that sees in nonhuman entities, which we conventionally call "nature", a stock of resources for a transcendental leap into a great unknown, of whose existence we are only aware through much metaphysical and mystical guesswork. These changes in collective mentalities were enacted through massive campaigns of destruction and criminalization of non-European knowledge systems and the equally massive transfer of cultural data, including painted and printed images. By looking at eschatological artworks, for example, Andeans were taught to map their social behavior, obedience or rebellion, onto two classes of bodily sensation, pleasure and pain. Subsequently, they were told to project these feelings into the two otherworldly realms that befit them—or, in Carmen's simpler, pithier formulation: "do this, you go suffer in Hell; don't do this, you get to enjoy Heaven". Thus taught the bread-and-butter of the Christian doctrine, hundreds of thousands, more likely millions, were sent to die mining mercury in Huancavelica and silver in Potosí, at an environmental, humanitarian, and socio-economical cost that is still felt to this day.

It seems that we are now facing the endgame of this whole let's-believe-in-Heaven adventure. In a recent interview to the "New York Times", the multi-billionaire, right-wing activist Peter Thiel not only suggested that Greta Thunberg might be the Antichrist, but also implied that the whole point of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition is "about transcending nature". He beats around the bush on how he views salvation working out, but nonetheless sees in techno-economic breakthroughs the providential hand of God. Conversely, environmental concerns about the global ecosystem are for him implicitly demoniac. But at least Thiel is not hypocritical about where he stands in the Heaven versus Earth divide—that is, screw Earth and the many if a few can have Heaven.

The same cannot be said of Jeff Bezos. While his Amazon exploits and pollutes the planet on an unprecedented scale, the retail mogul established his Earth Fund that pretends to be the largest philanthropic commitment ever in the fight against climate change. The back-up plan, though, is quite something else. In February 2021, Bezos announced his resignation as Amazon's CEO to pursue the development of space colonies. The imagery he deploys to describe his otherworldly communities is properly paradisiac: he envisions lush recreational colonies at zero-G, "so [people] can go flying with [their] own wings", under an ideally-kept climate, like "Maui on its best day all year long". Not wholly surprisingly, what is indirectly funding these escapist fantasies are Bezos's tax-avoidance strategies. Thus, while he pictures a future for humanity in the great beyond, he is also vampirizing humankind out of the resources needed to sustain life here on Earth.

In the meantime, in the real Amazon, religious cults like the AEMINPU are taking down a significant portion of the Peruvian side of the rainforest in the hopes of establishing a New Jerusalem. Based on their neo-Joachimite beliefs, they expect to take shelter there from the soon-to-be apocalyptic storms as they wait for Kingdom Come. The activities of such groups should cause us much panic. Matt Finer, director of the Monitoring the Andean Amazon

Project (MAAP), recently warned that rampant deforestation of the region through heavy machinery, pesticides, and slash-and-burn farming could soon push this biome past the point of no return. Although there is no broad agreement on the global impact of the fast-approaching dieback of the Amazon, renowned meteorologist Carlos Nobre was categorical in a 2019 interview to the "Guardian": "It is the end of the world".

* * *

In Engramma 165, the edition that set the standard for the international reception of the Warburgian tradition, Cássio Fernandes begins his excellent account of the reception of the Warburgian tradition among Latin American scholars by recalling the sojourn of Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda in Berlin from 1929 to 1931. Fernandes notices that, despite Buarque de Hollanda never having directly cited Warburg, he was nonetheless very much aware of the school of thought associated with the name. In fact, as Fernandes duly comments on, his monumental *Visão do Paraíso* reads and feels like a Warburgian work. In it, the Brazilian sociologist traces the uses of the Edenic myth in the European creation of the Americas by probing into the Puritan exceptionalism of the English, the gold-filled fantasies of the Spanish, and the exploitative pragmatism of the Portuguese. The author intimates that, by exploring the transatlantic transfer of paradisiacal topoi through close readings of the primary sources, his project is that of unearthing the foundations of the New World *forma mentis*. His archeological animus, however, is not one of rehabilitation, but exorcism. In his beautiful and hard-to-translate Portuguese, Buarque de Hollanda writes: "I would say, effectively, that one of the missions of the historian, as long as he is interested in the things of his time—but otherwise, can he still be called a historian?—consists of trying to expel the demons of History from the present".

Wind might have avoided the image of the historian as an exorcist, but he would have certainly agreed that scholars cannot ignore their historical moment. In fact, they are methodologically obliged to do so. In "Some Points of Contact Between History and Natural Science", he insists that historians are not detached observers but participants in the whole they study, obliged to physically tune in to the past's reverberations in the present—signals they inevitably warp for the future. "One must be historically affected; caught by the mass of past experience that intrudes into the present in the shape of 'tradition'", he writes, "demanding, compelling, often only narrating, reporting, pointing to other past experience which has not as yet been unfolded". Wind published these words in 1934, five years before Germany invaded Poland and unleashed the horrors of the Second World War. Buarque de Hollanda's book came out in 1959, half a decade prior to the military coup that subjected Brazil to twenty-one years of a brutal dictatorship. Both scholars crafted their theories of history under looming cataclysms: one amid Europe's collapse into fascism, the other on the brink of the US-backed authoritarian turn in Latin America. Such was their age.

Ours is a bit more tragic. Massive deforestation and the depletion of water resources, the collapse of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, ticking CO_2 and methane bombs, the rise of messianic authoritarianism and end times fascism—these and so many other issues com-

pound our here and now. Their origin seems to predate us by some five hundred years and their aftermath will determine the centuries to come. Hence, my betrayal of certain expectations, if there ever was such a thing, came out of translating not only Wind's words from English into Portuguese, but also his past concerns and methods into our own.

As I said at the beginning, I wrote this piece because I was asked to. Ghelardi thought my experience as a Latin American scholar hopscotching between languages, disciplines, and continents was bizarre enough to justify all this self-indulgence in an edition on Warburg *ultramar*. And I will leave it to you, readers, to judge that for yourselves.

Now, Maurizio, if you have read thus far, please forgive me for laying bare so much. As I learned from you, Wind, and Terence, *homo sum*—thus not alien to the pettiness, nor to the greatness, and certainly not to "the exuberant excess of [our] subjective propensities".

And you are the one who first made me read William James so many years ago.

Abstract

This contribution presents *Arte e anarquia*, the Portuguese edition of Edgar Wind's 1963 volume *Art and Anarchy*. Published by Edunicamp in 2025, the edition is edited by Ianick Takaes and Patrícia Dalcanale Menesis, with translation, introduction, and critical apparatus by Takaes. In his introductory essay, Takaes retraces the history of the book's composition while interweaving it with his own scholarly trajectory.

keywords | Edgar Wind; Maurizio Ghelardi; Aby Warburg; Art and Anarchy; Brasil.

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