

# The farewell book

Carlos Jiménez

Translation: Paloma Checa Gismero

“*The object and the aura*” [1], by Juan Antonio Ramírez, is certainly a compilation of his intellectual concerns, both the oldest and the most recent ones. He offers signals of this scale when he states, in the grungingly written introduction, that the first chapter of the book, centred in the idea of the panopticum, is “remotely inspired by a previous version” included in a catalog published in the year 2000. But I would dare to go further and declare that in this book –sadly his last, due to his early death right after its publication– resumes and rebuilds essential issues for the definition and display of his work and his thinking as a whole. Beginning by his questioning of the historical paradigms that ruled the writing of the History of Art, ideas in force during his years as a student, to the thought that History is a sequence of stages –each one characterized by the government of well-defined schools, movements or fashions– that necessarily implies the abolition of the former by the upcoming of a newer one, he opposed the idea of a History based in the accumulation of stages, within the frame of a logic related to the braudelian *longue durée* than to the abrogation of perishable fashion. In fact, the title he chose for this compilation of interlaced essays indicates this strategic option: it is the copulative preposition that relates the object to the aura, and clearly shows the coexistence of both terms, rather than to be placed in a grammatical construction such as the one in Simón Marchán’s seminal work *From the Art of the Object to the Art of the Concept*, where a sequence is implied. Ramírez’s historiographical option is not, however, a mere composition of a book title, but it radically determines its content.

The analysis he carries out of those he considers the main six subjects –panoptic vision, the development of illusory movement, the celebration of primitivism, the ruling of real objects over fiction ones, the artistic reclaim of the earth and land, and the reevaluation of Benjamin’s aura– is guided and lightened by his belief in the coexistence of modern art with the visual regime of the Renaissance, even sustaining that its achievements are intelligible only in direct relation with the Renaissance legacy, still alive in them.

Two final remarks. Firstly, this work steps outside the classic linear structure of books, where beginning and end are clearly limited; it is closer to the cortazarian ‘model kit’ which, despite organizing content by a preconceived order determined by the author, admits the possibility of it being altered by the reader, as he discovers connections between parts of the content unperceived by the author. Secondly, the determining role images play in this opening, such as they do in Aby Warburg’s *Atlas Mnemosine*, carrying free irreducible meanings, or at least different ones from those the discursive writing offers.

Footnotes

[1] Juan Antonio Ramírez. *El objeto y el aura. [Des] orden visual del arte moderno*, Madrid, Akal/Arte contemporáneo, 2009.