Considering the human expressive need of representing pathos "from helpless melancholy to murderous cannibalism", Aby Warburg defined the hermeneutic device of *Pathosformeln* as "gestures to the superlative degree" that appear fixed in artefacts by means of figurative formulae since the most remote times, and as imprints ("engrams") that can be ‘reactivated’ by artists in various periods. We find a systematic consideration of these iconographic formulae in Warburg’s last, unfinished work, the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1929). The Atlas, in fact, is a collection of expressions of human dynamism, enclosed within a labyrinth of images that spreads from antiquity to contemporary age. This paper aims to offer a reading of the different forms of iconography of pain that can be found in the Atlas: from the “ancient pre-coined expressions” of suffering in plates 5 and 6, to the “re-emergence of the Dionysian pathos of destruction and victim” in plates 41 and 41a - especially through the figure of Laocoon. Finally, in plate 42 we follow the “energetic and semantic inversion of the pathos of suffering”: the frenzied despair of Mary Magdalene as "Maenad under the Cross", and the theme of melancholy meditation, which from the "Theater of Death" continues towards the figure of the intellectual genius, "son of Saturn", in plates 53, 56 and 58.