

The Lifespan of Artworks Between the Earth and the World

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When browsing through a book by a Belgian art historian Roger H. Marijnissen, entitled *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art* (1967) a phrase caught my attention and began to haunt me:

*Il est parfois difficile, voire impossible de faire une nette distinction entre l'usure et la patine.*¹

This translates in English as: 'It is sometimes difficult, or even impossible, to make a sharp distinction between effacement and patina.' This led me to ponder such questions as time, which, as Aristotle stated (*Physics*, 217b) 'is that which is not', or is only 'barely and scarcely'², and the working of the artwork which transcends its materiality. The fundamental question of my paper is, however: can we really draw a strict demarcation line between life and death?³

The actual inspiration for my talk came from my astonishment that the metaphor 'lifespan of an artwork' seems to be becoming a 'dead metaphor' – a worn-out trope whose figurativity has been gradually erased to such an extent that, as Jacques Derrida said, the 'fabulous scene which brought it into being' is only barely discernible, and remains only, 'active and stirring', as 'inscribed in

Roger H. Marijnissen,
Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art (1967), title page

- 1 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art* (Bruxelles: Éditions Arcade, 1967), 168–69.
- 2 Jacques Derrida. 'Ousia and Grammê: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*.' In *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated, with Additional Notes, by Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 39.
- 3 Derrida argued that ontical disciplines – such as biology and anthropology – 'naively put into operation more or less clear conceptual presuppositions (*Vorbegriffe*) about life and death'. Jacques Derrida. *Aporias*. Transl. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 29.

white ink, as an invisible drawing covered over in a palimpsest'.⁴ This is a well-known citation from Derrida's essay 'White Mythology' (La mythologie blanche, 1971), where the author uses the concept of *usure*. In this work Derrida is studying a dialogue between Aristos and Polyphilos depicted in Anatole France's essay 'The Garden of Epicurus' (1895), in which the 'two interlocutors are exchanging views [...] on the sensory figure which is sheltered and used (up), to the point of appearing imperceptible, in every metaphysical concept. Abstract notions always hide a sensory figure. And the history of metaphysical language is said to be confused with the erasure of the efficacy of the sensory figure and the *usure* of its effigy'.⁵ Derrida defines *usure* as 'erasure by rubbing, exhaustion, crumbling away, but also the supplementary product of a capital, the exchange which far from losing the original investment would fructify its initial wealth, would increase its return in the form of revenue, additional interest, linguistic surplus value [...]'.⁶ Therefore, instead of presenting the question that has sometimes been asked: 'What shall we do with artworks at the end of their lifespan?', I would like to pose another question: What shall we do with the metaphor 'lifespan of an artwork' which seems to be – metaphorically expressed – in the evening of its life?

In his essay 'Objectivity and Dis-closedness: The Phenomenological Working of Art' (2011) Jeff Malpas refers to the well-known ontological distinction that Martin Heidegger made between the 'Earth' (*Erde*) and the 'World' (*Welt*). In simplified terms, the 'Earth' can be understood to be the physical objectivity of an artefact – but in a sense that it is deeply impenetrable and resistant to any opening up.⁷ The 'World', in contrast, is the cultural and symbolic context, the 'accessibility' or 'manifestness of beings as such as a whole' to a *Dasein* ('being-there').⁸ In Heideggerian terms, between the 'Earth' and the 'World' – alternatively, between the artwork and its 'working' or, in Andrew Benjamin's words, 'self-effectuation – there is strife (*Streit*), a never ending conflictual tension, a productive opposition and mutual belongingness of concealment and disclosure in which, as Malpas says, the 'material objectivity constantly transcends itself'.⁹ What does he mean by that? Although he says that the 'actual materiality of the work comes to be effaced in terms of what it shows', he does not mean by this '*Aufhebung*' that the material objectivity would be erased for the benefit of some higher content – this showing does not immaterialise the physical artefact, but creates a tension of dis-closedness (*Offenbarkeit*). In this sense, Malpas suggests, the artwork can be compared with metaphor: 'Just as an artwork cannot be identical with any material object, neither is a metaphor identical with the words and sentences in which it is expressed.' From this we can conclude that as an artwork is never identical with any material object, it transcends the physical 'condition' of the material object. So, if an artwork has a lifespan – as has been suggested – the lifespan necessarily transcends the physical object. Here Malpas finds some affinity with the working of metaphor (Malpas refers to Donald Davidson's conception of metaphor as a process): 'Just as an artwork cannot be identical with any material object, neither is a metaphor identical with the words and sentences in which it is expressed'¹⁰ – metaphor transcends them. From this we can conclude that an artwork is never identical with any material object.

4 Jacques Derrida. 'White Mythology.' In *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated, with Additional Notes, by Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 213.

5 Jacques Derrida. 'White Mythology', 211.

6 Jacques Derrida. 'White Mythology', 210.

7 We must remember, however, that 'The work does not consist of [*besteht nicht aus*] earth as if of a material, instead it endures [*besteht*] the earth, it withstands its closing-off. By supplying the earth, the work itself thus sets itself back into the earth as into its closing-off ground on which it rests; a ground which, since it is essential and always closing-off, is an abyss.' Martin Heidegger. 'On the Origin of the Work of Art. First Version.' Transl. Jerome Veith. In *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 137.

8 Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Transl. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 292.

9 Jeff Malpas. 'Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness: The Phenomenological Working of Art.' In *Art and Phenomenology*, ed. Joseph D. Parry (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 57, 65, 69.

10 Jeff Malpas. '*Objectivity and Self Dis-closedness*', 62–63.

Although the metaphor 'lifespan of an artwork' seems to be at the end of its lifespan – it is like a coin whose original figure has been so worn away, effaced, and polished in the hands of its users that we have to find some means to make it visible again – we should not forget its origin as a metaphor. An artwork, or any other artefact *per se*, does not really have a lifespan or biography, and therefore it is incapable of dying, for instance. In his book *Unterwegs der Sprache* (1959) Heidegger thought that only we as rational 'World-forming' human beings are capable of *properly dying* (*eigentlich sterben*): 'Mortals are they who can experience death *as death* [...]. Animals cannot do this.'¹¹ This 'experience granted to the mortal, of which the animal is incapable, depends upon language.'¹² Inanimate matter – a rock, for instance – is totally 'Worldless' and therefore cannot die. Even a living animal – a lizard basking in the sun on this rock – does not have the 'World' in the sense that we do, and therefore it is almost as incapable of dying as a stone is: when its organism ceases to function, it does not die, but only perishes (this is the ontical death). Ergo: neither a stone nor an animal has a lifespan. In that case, how could we think that an artwork had one?

As Derrida has reminded us, 'metaphor is never innocent'.¹³ When using the metaphor of the lifespan of an artwork, we perform an act of speech in which the artefact in its present physical integrity and its current symbolic-cultural relatedness is confronted with the loss of them. In such acts of speech, the metaphor of the lifespan acts as a detour through which the *real* possibility of non-being is transported (from which Aristotle used the term *epiphora*) into the artefact. Typically, metaphors are created by juxtaposing elements that are incompatible with each other, generally the literal and the metaphorical; and in this case the animate and the inanimate. It can be concluded that a metaphor of lifespan stays 'alive' only as long as there remains a considerable tension between these two poles. Preserving the artefact, then, signifies preserving this conflict between identity and difference that Paul Ricoeur saw as characteristic of metaphor. He wrote that 'In the metaphorical statement, the "similar" is perceived *despite* difference, *in spite of* contradiction. Resemblance [...] is the logical category [...] in which approximation (bringing close) meets the resistance of being "distant".'¹⁴ Malpas calls this conflict a tension of dis-closedness between the work and its performance.

Within the field of the conservation of contemporary art, it is common to think that when an artwork is no longer considered to correspond to the artist's intention (due to physical changes in its structure, appearance or functionality, for instance) it becomes defunct. However, the artwork is not reducible to the artist's intention only, nor is it reducible to its physical matter, to its Earth in a narrow sense. But just as we do not have only one World, we do not have just one Earth. Just as in the case of metaphor, the Earth does not remain the same in different contexts. In different 'Worlds', the very same stuff generates different materialities, other 'Earths'¹⁵ – as Graham Harman states: 'Each figure embodies its own ground.'¹⁶ This assimilates the 'Earth' (i. e. the ontological matter) with metaphor.¹⁷ As long as the Earth – the material objectivity of the work – is capable of generating different materialities in different Worlds, it is capable of dis-closing the artwork. As Jeff Malpas writes: 'The material objectivity of the artwork is not [...] merely its inert "material" but its own

11 Martin Heidegger. *On the Way to Language*. Transl. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper, 1971), 107.

12 Jacques Derrida. *Aporias*, 36.

13 Jacques Derrida. 'Force and Signification.' In *Writing and Difference*. Translated, with an Introduction and Additional Notes, by Alan Bass (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 17.

14 Paul Ricoeur. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Transl. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 196.

15 Here I make a distinction between ontical and ontological earths, between the Earth and the 'Earth' (I write both Earths using a capital letter to underline their technical nature) and respectively between 'matter' and 'materiality'.

16 Graham Harman. 'Materialism is Not the Solution. On Matter, Form, and Mimesis.' *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 47, (2014), 106.

17 Jeff Malpas. 'Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness', 68.

dynamic self-disclosure as that which occurs in a singular, *placed* occurrence.¹⁸ When an artwork ceases to self-disclose itself, when it has exhausted all its metaphorical force, all we have left is the worldless stone-cold earth.¹⁹

Our phenomenological 'Earth' – the ground of our Being – consists of our flesh. As Jean-Luc Marion writes: 'To the contrary to the physical body [that is, to the Earth without quotation marks] for which there is always *over-there* [...] my flesh fixes me definitely to its *here* [to the *Da* of *Dasein*, being-there] which becomes my [singular] *here*.'²⁰ The World is accessible for me only through my flesh – accessibility entails a medium. A stone does not have flesh, therefore it does not have accessibility to its surroundings and that is also why the Earth it is lying on is not given to it as Earth as an underlying support. An animal does have flesh, and therefore a lizard basking in the sun, for instance, is capable of touching a rock it is lying upon and sensing its warmth. However, it is deprived of the flesh and *logos* we have and therefore poor in World.²¹ But what is the relation of an artwork to its surroundings; or what is the relationship of its material nature and its working? In any case an artwork must generate its own ground for its Being. It is this 'here', *Da*, where the self-disclosure or self-transcendence of the artwork, its performance which goes beyond its subject matter and the context – or tenor and vehicle – takes place. Malpas says that 'the setting of the artwork in its locatedness, its standing forth in its material objectivity [...] already brings it into a certain minimal relatedness with that which surrounds it – yet, its material objectivity always conflicts with that context.'²²

Here we are talking about object biographies. It has become commonplace in the fields of ethnography, anthropology and archaeology to talk about biographies of an object. In his seminal article Igor Kopytoff states that 'In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: What [...] are the biographical possibilities inherent in its "status" and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realised? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognised "ages" or periods in the thing's "life" [...] How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?'²³ Now, the problem is that things that have biographies are commodities. When an artefact becomes a commodity, it loses its singularity, it becomes a thing that – as Kopytoff says – 'can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart [...] which has an equivalent value'.²⁴ But are artworks really commodities? Are they even artefacts or objects – or should we rather regard them as performances?

Then how should we think about the lifespan of an artwork? In his book Marijnissen presents a curious diagram in which he refers to an imaginary artwork. In this graph Point A refers to the artwork at its birth. If this artwork is somehow poorly executed (if one may say so) due to its 'improper' technique or the 'defective' materials²⁵ used, it may deteriorate within a few decades to a state whereby it no longer has any aesthetic value (X). It remains in this stage for some tens of years, eventually ending up as a complete ruin (Z). But what if instead we are talking about an artwork that is 'technically sound' (*techniquement saine*)

18 Jeff Malpas. 'Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness', 72.

19 'Dead matter' is, however – as Heidegger remarks – a meaningless, redundant concept. Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics*, 236.

20 Jean-Luc Marion. *In Excess. Studies of Saturated Phenomena*. Translated by Robyn Horner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 89. 'Our existence is always singular and unique.' Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics*, 169.

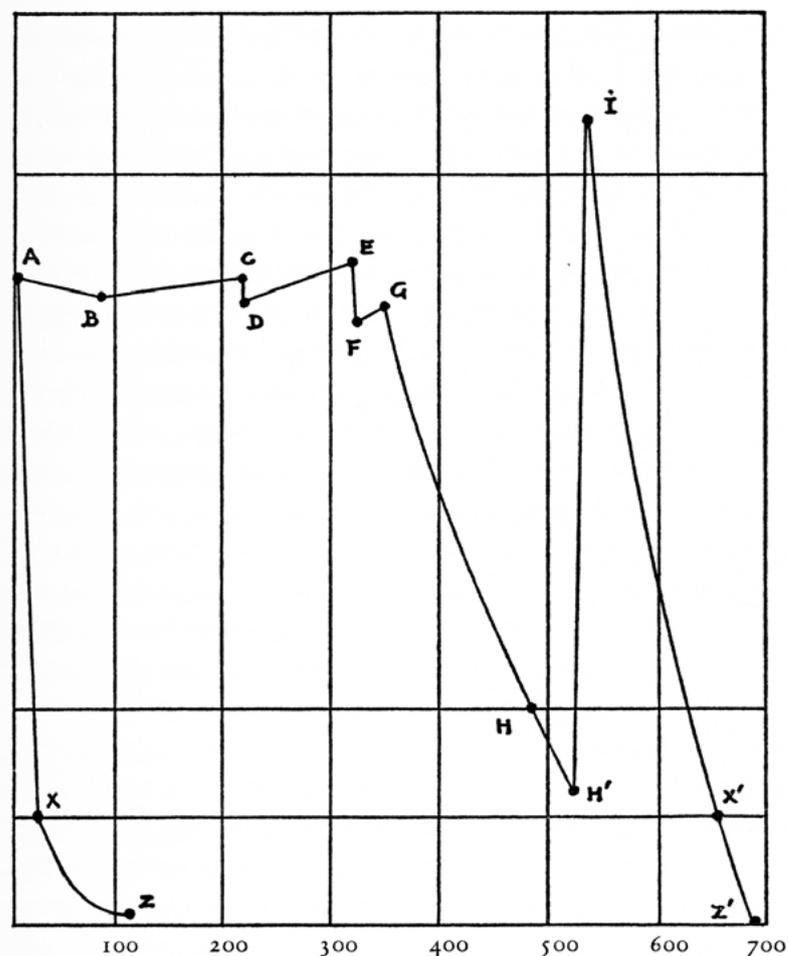
21 Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics*, 197.

22 Jeff Malpas. 'Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness', 68.

23 Igor Kopytoff. 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process.' In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66–67.

24 Igor Kopytoff. 'The Cultural Biography of Things', 68.

25 Of course, from an ontological point of view, any technique or material can be neither improper nor defective.



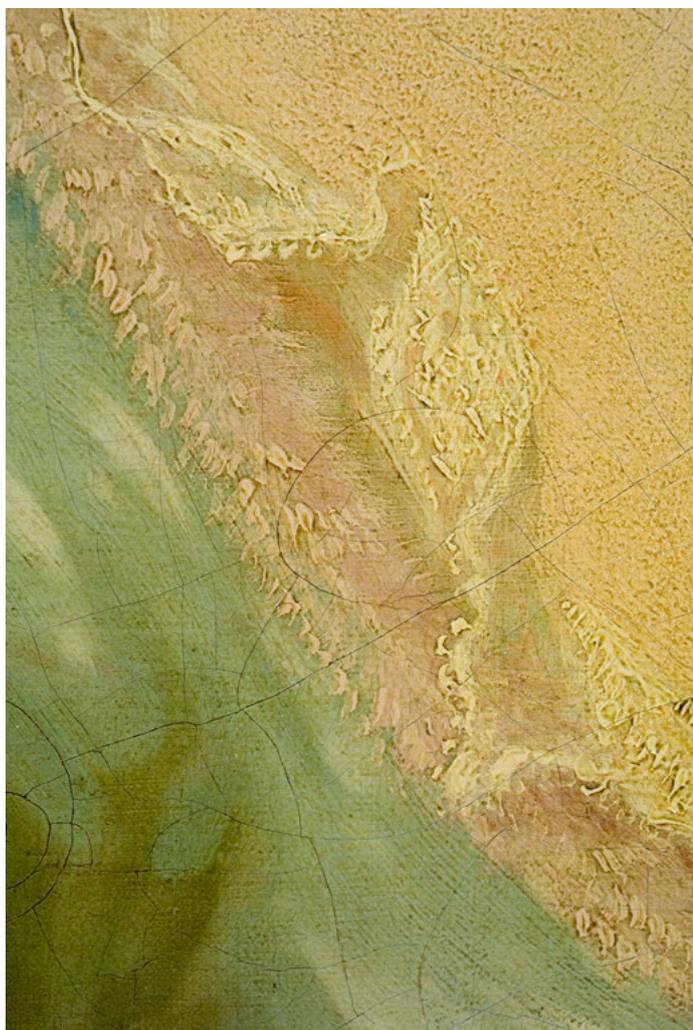
Roger H. Marijnissen, *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art* (1967), page 231

and whose materials are more permanent? Marijnissen states that the artistic and aesthetic value of this artwork stays the same, or nearly the same (B), for some tens of years. But then something surprising happens – there is something uncanny, that transcends the material. According to Marijnissen, the aesthetic value of the artwork rises because of the ‘ennoblement’ (*ennoblissement*) of the painting materials due to the ‘beneficial effects of ageing’ (*effets salutaires du vieillissement*) (B–C).²⁶

I wonder, is this the self-transcendence of the material objectivity of the artwork that Jeff Malpas talks about? Anyway, Marijnissen adds that when an artwork deteriorates, its aesthetic value diminishes slightly (C–D; E–F). Over centuries it further degrades (G–H) until finally it ends up ruined (H–H’). But this is not the end of its lifespan, says the author. Due to the quality of some of the totally disintegrated works, to the ennoblement of their materials and the circumstances associated with those changes, a metamorphosis can occur, in which the aesthetic value of the artwork may rise to an unprecedented level (H’–I). This summit that marks the apogee of the artwork leads eventually to its ‘fatal and irrevocable decline (I–X’–Z’).²⁷

²⁶ R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 230.

²⁷ R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 231.



How much *usure* can an artwork endure?
 Isak Wacklin, *Miss Heckford (detail)*, 1757, oil on canvas,
 Finnish National Gallery /
 Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery,
 Conservation Department

or even fatal consequences for the artefact.³¹ Then, how should we take that very typical phenomenon in old paintings: craquelures? Is it not also a *nachträglich*, 'deferred effect' of *usure*?

Then again, how much *usure* can an artwork endure? Marijnissen contends that in some cases *usure* can be so excessive (*plus de l'usure*), that it is no longer (*plus de l'usure*)³² distinguishable from degradation. Maybe we could call it a 'general economy of *usure*' (*l'usure généralisée*), in which profit produces loss, and *vice versa*:

*Rappelons que la patine peut, à un stade plus avancé, présenter le caractère d'une véritable abrasion. Dans ce cas il y a lieu de parler d'usure. Il est parfois difficile, voire impossible de faire une nette distinction entre l'usure et la patine.*³³

Most of these downward and upward trends are noticeable on the surface of the artefact. Next I will talk about two such surface phenomena: effacement (*usure*) and patina. We remember that Derrida defined *usure* as 'erasure by rubbing, exhaustion, crumbling away'. Marijnissen says that excessive effacement can lead to a point where the original form of the artefact is completely 'strangely transformed' (*étrangement transformée*).²⁸ Historically the term 'patina' was used to refer to the corroded surfaces of metal, especially bronze objects.²⁹ Marijnissen adds, that in our days, one uses the concept to refer to nearly all signs of wear and impregnations by some foreign matter caused by regular, everyday handling and maintenance – and that its content can be exactly defined:

*Par ce terme nous voulons désigner toutes les traces provoquées par des attouchements fréquents, par le frottement, les accrochages, l'entretien, l'enfumage non intentionnel ou les imprégnations quelconques qu'entraîne l'usage régulier, voir quotidien, de l'objet en question.*³⁰

Marijnissen thinks that even smoke from candles may create patinated surfaces. When an artefact is placed close to an open fire, wax candles or some other smoke-emitting sources, then combustion products are likely to be formed on its surface. In some cases smoke and heat can provoke a chemical reaction in the object's physical matter. Marijnissen adds – surprisingly, perhaps – that smoke is often ennobling, but one should be aware that smoke that lasts too long can have detrimental

28 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 169.

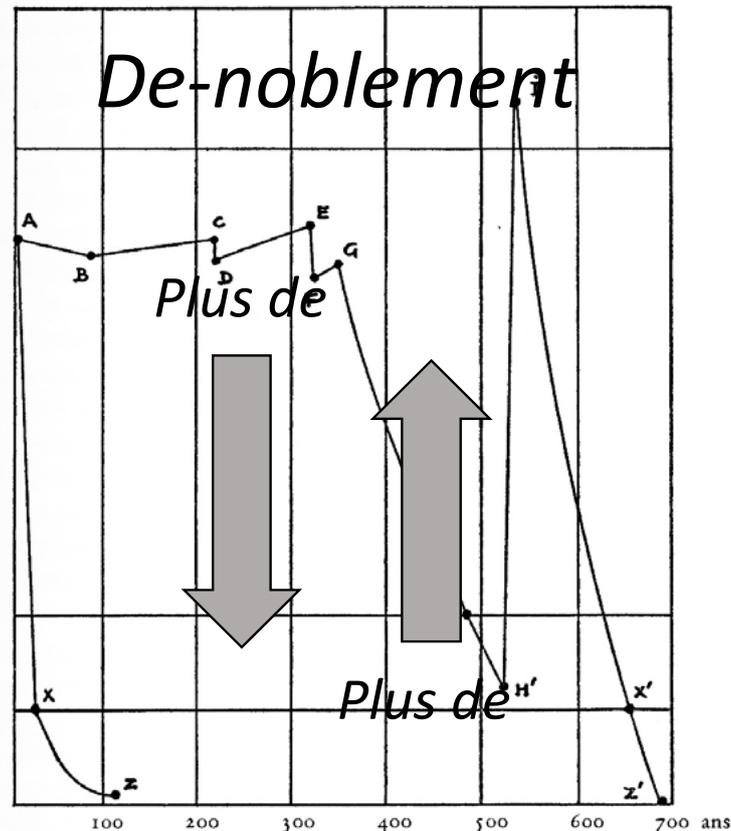
29 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 214.

30 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 166.

31 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 167.

32 With the idiom of *plus de usure* I refer to Derrida's chapter entitled *Plus de métaphore* ('more-no more metaphor') in *White Mythology*. As translator Alan Bass notes, Derrida's pun refers to the 'general economy' of metaphor. Jacques Derrida. 'White Mythology', 219, note 20.

33 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 168.



Actually, *usure* belongs to the quasi-concepts Derrida called ‘undecidables’ (*indécidables*). In Derrida’s philosophy one can find several such non-concepts that deconstruct all binary oppositions of Western metaphysics: *l’écriture* and *l’archi-écriture*, *la trace* and *l’archi-trace*, *l’hymen*, *le pas*, *l’entre*, *le supplément*, *autour*, *plus de*, *sur*, *pharmakon* and *différance*, just to name a few.³⁴ Just like them, *usure* in itself is neither present nor visible.³⁵ So, we cannot precisely define what we are talking about when we are using this concept – excess ennoblement turns into denoblement – from this we could coin another quasi-Derridean ‘undecidable’ term: *de-noblement* (hyphen intentional). Therefore, in order to appear this quasi-transcendental aspect of *usure* needs a physical medium through which it can manifest itself, whether as deformation or as patina. Marijnissen emphasises that the nature of this medium is crucial: if the physical matter on behalf of which *usure* appears is less resistant to mechanical or some other kind of stress, it would appear as a deformation (causing the value of the object to decrease) – but if the physical matter is more durable the artefact may gain value as a consequence of patination.³⁶ The element of time – the Aristotelian *nun* – needs surfaces in order to appear as a phenomenon because time is that which ‘is not’, or which is only barely and scarcely.³⁷ Alois Riegl recognised that time submits to examination only indirectly, as it *appears* in objects or artefacts.³⁸

34 Charles Ramond. *Dictionnaire Derrida* (Paris: Ellipses Édition, 2016).

35 I suggest *usure* can be compared with another Derridean ‘material undecidable’, *là cendre*.

36 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l’œuvre d’art*, 166.

37 ‘The *nun*, the element of time [...] is not in itself temporal. It is temporal only in becoming temporal, that is, in ceasing to be [...]’ Jacques Derrida. ‘*Ousia and Grammē*’, 39–40.

38 Michael Gubser, *Time’s Visible Surface. Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 176–77.

Marijnissen concludes that here we are dealing with aesthetic phenomena, whose content cannot be strictly determined. We just have to accept the fact that, as Marijnissen notes, referencing some aestheticians: 'One is sensible to the beauty or one is not [...].'³⁹ He concludes that the 'concept of patina designates a thing people sensible to aesthetic phenomena find pleasant to look at'.³⁹ But can we not find pleasure in looking at picturesque ruins, as well? The French painter Pierre Puvis de Chavannes is alleged to have said that there is something that is even more beautiful than a beautiful thing: a ruin of a beautiful thing⁴⁰, that is: something that transcends the perfect form. Excess beauty breaks a beautiful thing – just as excessive pleasure turns *plaisir* into *jouissance*: *plus de beauté (+)* → *plus de beauté (-)*. As in the case of dirt, one can study with analytic methods the physical and chemical composition of a substance we call dirt. By these same methods, we cannot, however, elucidate what it is that makes a certain substance dirt.⁴¹ Something just occurs *as dirt*.⁴² The concept of dirt is sedimented in the 'Earth' of our being. The same goes for patina. Just like dirt, patina is not a physical or chemical property – but just like dirt, patina needs physical matter, a medium, in order to appear. But it needs manifestness of beings to *Dasein* and *logos* (i.e. the World), as well. Patina is – as Paul Philippot underlined – a critical concept.⁴³ Or could we call it a metaphorical concept?

Maybe this is why Jean-Luc Marion has remarked that 'phenomenologically, time does not pass; if it were passing, it would not leave any trace [...]. Time, as the past accomplished, should never be able to appear if it were limited to passing [...]. He claims that the past is instead accumulated in the flesh of [his] members, muscles and bones, which [...] bend, harden, and lose their anterior performance'.⁴⁴ Marion claims that 'the weight of time lands on [his] organs and accumulates in a very place where [his] flesh is most openly visible' – exposed⁴⁵ – 'on [his] face [...] it is on [his] face that time prefers to leave traces, its traces [...]. One never sees the same face twice, because time, in being accumulated, deforms it as much it shapes it'.⁴⁶ Our faces do not remain the same despite the passage of time, but because of time. Georges Didi-Huberman offers another view on this subject: 'In the course of an hallucinatory experience, I look at the palm of my hand, my wrinkles, my lines of life and love, etc. Hyperesthesia⁴⁷ makes my attention focus on the most subtle movement of my muscles. Very soon what I see becomes my destiny: time carves its way in every movement. In a few seconds my hand becomes in my eyes an old man's hand, then a hand of a dead person'.⁴⁸ He reminds us that in our daily lives we only rarely take time to watch how our features are being carved in our flesh. This is because most of the time our hands – just like our other organs – remain invisible, ready-to-hand, withdrawn into subservience. They appear as phenomena

39 R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 214–16.

40 'Il y a quelque chose de plus beau qu'une belle chose, c'est la ruine d'une belle chose.' Cited in Marijnissen's *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 236.

41 On this subject, see Olli Lagerspetz. *A Philosophy of Dirt* (Islington: Reaktion Books, 2018).

42 'The "as" belongs to manifestness – beings as such, as this or that.' Martin Heidegger. *Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics*, 292.

43 Indeed, patina is precisely the 'normal' effect that time has on material. This is not a physical or chemical, but *critical* concept.' Paul Philippot. 'The Idea of Patina and the Cleaning of Paintings.' In *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. Edited by Nicholas Stanley Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr. & Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro. (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 373. Actually, here Philippot differs from Marijnissen, who argues that patina has its origin in the physical and chemical processes. For him, patina is not a critical concept but an objective fact. See R.-H. Marijnissen. *Dégradation, conservation et restauration de l'œuvre d'art*, 216–17.

44 Jean-Luc Marion. *In Excess*, 95.

45 Here I refer to Jean-Luc Nancy's neologism '*l'expeausition*', in which the French word for 'flesh', *le peau*, encounters *l'exposition*, 'exposure'.

46 Jean-Luc Marion. *In Excess*, 95. Our faces are, therefore, in a constant process of de-formation (hyphen intentional).

47 Excessive sensitivity to sensory stimuli.

48 Georges Didi-Huberman. *La Demeure, la souche: appartements de l'artiste* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2012), 137. My translation.

only when they cease to obey our will, our desire. The same goes for time. Time can appear as a phenomenon only when it becomes a broken tool.⁴⁹ Heidegger argued that only moments of profound boredom reveal to us that ‘there is’ (*es gibt; il y a*) time. Just like our hands in their invisible working, the artwork is not an object but, as Malpas says: A ‘coming-to-be’ as ‘object’⁵⁰ – or, I would prefer to say: ‘coming-to-be’ as a ‘phenomenon’. It is indeterminate in its nature. It is never ‘identical with itself [...] since it is always in the process of its own self-transcendence.’⁵¹ It is therefore very problematical to talk about the lifespan of artworks.

49 Graham Harman suggests that metaphor can be seen as a broken tool: ‘Our attention is drawn to it, yet it is still a withdrawn enigma inaccessible to us [...]’. Graham Harman, ‘Materialism is Not the Solution’, 108. Harman makes a distinction between a (ready-to-hand) ‘tool’ and a (present-to-hand) ‘broken tool’ which he sees as two modes of ‘Tool-Being’ of the Heideggerian equipmental universe. See Graham Harman. *Tool-Being. Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2002).

50 Jeff Malpas. ‘Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness’, 66.

51 Jeff Malpas. ‘Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness’, 72.