Introduction

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Why Heidegger? Why Now?

Any art historian, philosopher of art, or theorist of the visual who is concerned with issues of historiography and interpretation above and beyond a particular chronological specialization, will undoubtedly be familiar with Martin Heidegger’s writings. Heidegger’s best-known contribution to the history of art, his 1935–36 essay ‘Origin of the Work of Art’, calls into question the essence of the artwork, the status of the artist as originary creator, and thus, the stability of the artwork’s meaning. It is here that Heidegger challenges the notion of intentionality as a meaning bestowed by the artist to the work of art and in so doing repositions the notion of intentionality altogether, from the work of art’s inherent content to the path of questioning that the work elicits. Further, Heidegger refutes the method of comparison, already an established approach to situating works of art in a particular place in history. Instead, he posits hermeneutic movement as an access into the fundamental terms that constitute the work of art in a time and place: its origin, materiality (or thingliness), its status as a ‘work’, and its operation of setting up a world. In short, the essay stands as an imperative to both ask the essential questions of artworks and scrutinize our ways of interpreting them for our own time.

As art history opens its areas of specialization in particular historical times and geographic locations to different fields of inquiry that have begun to define themselves as disciplines in their own right, from visual and material culture studies, to design studies, visual technologies and new media, and studies in subjectivity (gender, sexuality, race, and religion), it will perhaps seem problematic to consider Heidegger’s body of scholarship as a way of reinvigorating art history and its ambitions. Moreover, would it not be entirely
antithetical to Heidegger’s own notion of origin to identify a singular male theorist as the intellectual source for such a redeployment of art history within the arts and humanities? While this is certainly the risk of our undertaking, we the editors take Heidegger’s writings as an aporia in the field, neither the last word on art, nor the primary authority on interpretation, but rather a constellation of problems that haunt the discipline while remaining strangely untouched within it. His work possesses a gravitational pull that has compelled many theorists, from his contemporaries to subsequent generations of critical thinkers such as Luce Irigaray, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, and more recently Jean-Luc Nancy, Catherine Malabou, and Graham Harman. However, the authors of this book do not remain confined to the philosophical tradition, reading Heidegger through and against the art historians Kurt Bauch, Heinrich Wölfflin, Erwin Panofsky, and Meyer Schapiro; the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan; the surrealist writer, theorist, and poet Georges Bataille; the cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard; and even the cognitive psychologist James J. Gibson. Perhaps most importantly, Heidegger is read along with specific works of art and practices.

A significant number of the essays in this collection have also been touched by the recent emergence of speculative realism and object-oriented ontology. Thus, we see the potential of Graham Harman’s radicalization of Heidegger’s writings to challenge the discipline’s objects of study, as well as the fundamental terms of phenomenology and interpretation. These diverse approaches to Heidegger’s thought open the discipline to deeper questions about the politics of writing histories, the nature of the object’s ‘interiority’, and the aesthetic dimension of ontology. The exploration of Heidegger that this book carries out, therefore, does not aim to formalize his contribution to art history. Quite the opposite, it seeks to pursue the diverse lines of thinking that have departed from Heidegger’s work, and through these, envision the future possibilities of writing compelling accounts of art and visual culture. Thus, it is not an attempt to return the discipline to a former state of unity (which never really existed). Nor is it a retrogressive move to reinstitute a privileged position for art objects within a broader field of critical scholarship on the visual.

As the essays in this collection show, Heidegger’s work has already led to some of the most penetrating lines of investigation in the discipline, such as the ontological status of the objects we study, the technological framing of the world, dwelling and world-making, how to think of ‘things’ beyond human-centered relationships, the spacing and temporality of history, the postulation that aesthetics is first philosophy, and the ethics of interpretation. As much as it appears that Heidegger has brought us to these disciplinary questions, however, the work of art history equally involves a rereading of Heidegger. It requires an interrogation of the conditions under which we become engaged with the world, and how works of art, and the realm of objects and
images more broadly, are integral to this engagement. It requires that we put pressure on Heidegger’s vocabulary of ‘authenticity’, ‘resoluteness’, and ‘the proper’, terms that have come to be viewed within the subtext of Heidegger’s reprehensible political dealings. Heidegger’s impact on the discipline is a reality, and it is precisely for this reason that his influence must be evaluated. Thus, as much as Heideggerian studies are haunted by the philosopher’s anti-Semitism and his affiliation with the Nazi Party, and the question of how and to what extent these engagements affected the trajectory of his thought, the only choice is to confront his writings head-on. As Jean-Luc Nancy eloquently writes with regard to the problem of reconciling Heidegger’s politics with his philosophy, ‘Denunciation is necessary. But so is enunciation … what matters above all is that this aporia, this knot is ours. This splinter falls in our garden. Whether it pleases us or not, we are concerned by it; for here, before us, with or without Heidegger, history both continues to break apart and is happening once again’.1

Nancy makes this statement with an insistence on the centrality of history for any form of politics, a claim that he connects to Heidegger in particular. History is not a continuous line of technological and socioeconomic development. It is fractious, tangled, obscure, and it shines forth in the collision of ideas. Hence, we are adamant about both the timeliness of this project for a discipline that aspires to write the history of art, and the untimeliness of Heidegger’s writings for art history. That is to say, Heidegger’s influence cannot be summarily assessed through a simple historicization of his writings, or even through a historiography of theory. We have therefore organized a cross section of pertinent philosophical and thematic domains that demonstrate strains of Heideggerian thought, methodological interventions, and disciplinary departures.

Our confrontation with Heidegger’s thought and the task of thinking – what Heidegger himself would call an *Auseinandersetzung* with another thinker’s thought – can only be accessed through his voluminous writings.2 We hope this book will encourage the reader to consider the full range of his work, and not just the manifest writings on art and technology. We say this not simply to foster a better understanding of how his conception of art fits in with his larger philosophical work but also to acknowledge that his engagement with art is inseparable from the fundamental question of Being that Heidegger pursues throughout all the turns and stages in his thought. Indeed, Heidegger offers a rough guideline to the development of his work – from an interest in the meaning of Being, to the truth of Being, to a topology of Being – including an increasing preoccupation with art during the 1930s marking the ‘turn’ from an emphasis on the meaning of Being towards the truth of Being. Whether explicitly or subtly, art is threaded through the question of Being at each juncture.3
Heidegger did not consider the study of art, or for that matter, ontology, ethics, or metaphysics, as a separate domain apart from the primordial question of Being, but rather as a moment, modality, or manifestation of it. His questioning and, at times, radical critique of the claims made for and from the various framing mechanisms of disciplinary, sub-disciplinary, or particular specialties dictated by the professionalization of philosophy, or art history, are still salutary and refreshing. It keeps us alert to the ambitions of our work, or lack thereof (are we simply constructing art historical narratives dictated by the implicit and explicit demands of an academic discipline, or are we thinking?). At stake in Heidegger’s efforts to reconsider the structure of the university in the early 1930s was an attempt to overturn this increasing fragmentation, specialization, and professionalization. We are simply not thinking hard enough – rising to the task and risk of thinking – if we consider his interest in reform as solely a reflection of his adherence to National Socialism and its attempts at gleichschaltung (coordination), although it surely was also this as well. Anyone, who works in the university system today knows that these are ongoing problems, hardly solved or adequately addressed by the terms ‘inter-’ or ‘cross-disciplinarity’.

It is precisely Heidegger’s capacious ontology that allows us to position the question of art (and perhaps the discipline of art history) as an avenue by which to probe the deepest implications of his entire body of writing. Thus we take seriously Philipe Lacoue-Labarthe’s proposal that Heidegger’s strongest engagement with the political occurs in his writing on art, and not necessarily in his overtly political texts of 1933–34. There are two lessons to draw from his claim: firstly, the most straightforward, is that it is clear that art is central to his thinking about politics and the political. Also implicit in Lacoue-Labarthe’s claim is that if in the mid-1930s, truth is fundamentally seen as a conflict between concealing and unconcealing, this is also a political paradigm, and art is clearly central to this ‘strife’, a condition most famously outlined in the ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, as the struggle between earth and world. Secondly, to follow this path in the opposite direction, it is clear that some of the most intriguing questions about art, art history, vision, and perception, are found in stretches of his writings not manifestly about those topics at all. Sometimes it is simply a matter of being attentive to the resonances between texts. For example, we find important echoes and elaborations between ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ of 1935–36, in the sections on art, aesthetics, perception and truth, and the first of his four lecture courses on Nietzsche, entitled The Will to Power as Art, delivered during the winter semester of 1936–37; the two sections on ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, in his Contributions of Philosophy (From Enowning), dated to 1936–38; and the significant passages related to Being, vision, and perspective – not to mention the specific but brief reference to van Gogh’s peasant shoes – found in his lecture course Introduction to Metaphysics, delivered in the summer semester of 1935.
Art Between Ontology and Ethics

If the task is to examine, once again, the work of art, the image, the object, and the worlds these disclose, this inevitably leads to ontology. For Heidegger, ontology is a phenomenology, not just the study of essence, but, more precisely, the study of how we even come to assume and define essence in the first place. It is for this reason that Heidegger focuses so insistently on the methods of modern science (both the natural and social sciences). In his pursuit to understand Dasein, there could be no greater offense than the reductive reasoning of scientific disciplines that seek to define ‘life’ through quantitative data from an assumed position of objectivity. Heidegger’s criticism of history, physics, and anthropology alike is that these disciplines are self-confirming systems of knowledge production: modern science studies a world that it has already framed into a world picture. The study of Being then, must resist such a framing, which inevitably presumes that we are viewers outside of that picture. Instead, it is the task of ontology to consider our engagement with the world from within it, and thereby access the reciprocal relationship between experiencing the world in its facticity, and recognizing the capacity to make a place in it, as a way of Being. What better example of this critique than the tenth appendix to ‘The Age of the World Picture’?

Anthropology is that interpretation of man that already knows fundamentally what man is and hence can never ask who he may be. For with this question it would have to confess itself shaken and overcome. But how can this be expected of anthropology when the latter expressly has to achieve nothing less than the securing consequent upon the self-secureness of the subjectum?6

This passage captures both Heidegger’s condemnation of the closed and circular system of inquiry that characterizes modern science and the imperative of his approach to ontology to seek out the potential of Dasein – to wonder who one may be and who one may become. These fundamental questions are therefore both the condition of Dasein and the fulfillment of its possibility.

Heidegger’s objective to shake up the self-secureness of the subject bore several trajectories of inquiry that have gained momentum in ways that he himself may never have imagined. Not only is it now common parlance to consider subjecthood as fundamentally unstable but also the essential basis of humanness is under scrutiny with renewed vigor. Humanness can no longer be speculated upon without the accompanying concepts of objecthood and animality, and without reconsidering the site of Being – experiencing it as dislocated and dispossessed – which brings a challenge to presumed distinctions between the interiority of the subject and the exterior world. Indeed, Heidegger establishes a new vocabulary to carry out his phenomenology of Being: drawing forward words, neutralizing and then
repitching them in order to formulate a language that would more accurately account for human existence. Being cannot be freely thought while it remains chained to a set of fallacious categories that either reduce the human to an organism, in the scientific tradition, or alternatively abstract human existence from ‘life’ in the transcendental tradition. Thus, in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger takes a circuitous path through the worldless stone, and the animal that is poor-in-world, in order to put into relief that Dasein is to assume a mode of comportment, and to have a capacity for world-formation.

This exploration, as many philosophers have noted in recent decades, finds the animal and the human inextricable in their mutual definition of one through the other. We might take, for example, Jacques Derrida’s provocative question, ‘But cannot this cat also be, deep within her eyes, my primary mirror?’ as a way of initiating his extensive response to Heidegger in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.

Inasmuch as Heidegger understands human life in contradistinction to, but also co-extensiveness with, the animal, an intertwinement that is further elaborated through poetic and artistic figurations of animality, he also compels a reassessment of Dasein in relation to objects. The essays in Part I, ‘Art between Ontology and Ethics’, take on this considerable task through speculation on the varying ways artworks situate the human subject among things, whether this be intrinsic to a representation, or within the viewing situation itself. If we are to pursue Heidegger’s elaboration of the relational existence of things, we find that objects themselves provide avenues of ontological exploration that lead beyond the distinction of things and equipment, or as either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand. As the American philosopher Graham Harman has suggested, not only do things have their own modes and qualities of interrelating – what he calls their ‘allure’ – but Heidegger’s distinction between humans and objects (the ontological difference between Being and beings) is far more tenuous than he himself acknowledges. Thus, Harman reassesses humans as ‘tool-beings’ whose relations are better read in terms of the allure of objects than in terms of the privileged anthropocentric mode of Being, such as Dasein. It is this same tendency in recent critical theory to reposition humans as existing in a democracy of objects, other species, and events, or what Bruno Latour would call ‘actants’, that obliges us to question again the terms of Dasein and its accountability to the history of art.

In his essay ‘Heidegger, Harman and Algorithmic Allure’, Robert Jackson addresses this challenge through a consideration of the algorithmic artwork, *Every Icon*, by John F. Simon and Antoine Schmitt. Not only does Jackson’s reading of Heidegger via Graham Harman put the notion of Dasein through its paces, he shows that it yields the possibility of an aesthetic account of artworks based on mathematical and technological systems. For example, an online artwork that is programmed to continue to grow and change infinitely (long after anybody is there to witness it) incorporates a sobering
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object-reality that exists beyond human perception. More strongly, Jackson suggests the possibility that an object has the potential to ‘experience’ aesthetics. That is to say, he refutes the human exclusivity of Dasein, and proposes a sense of what object aesthetics in an age of new media might be. He thus connects the aesthetic possibilities of Harman’s notion of allure to the art criticism of Jack Burnham, an early theorist of ‘technological art’, and to Michael Fried’s notion of absorption.

If Harman’s revision of Heidegger in terms of speculative realism may appear to be exclusively appropriate for new media art, Ileana Parvu’s essay by contrast demonstrates how a Heideggerian treatment of sculpture necessarily redefines the notion of interiority and thus subjectivity altogether. Here, we cannot presume the interiority of the subject as an implicit quality of Dasein. Rather, as Parvu shows, in Jacques Lacan’s reading of Heidegger, interiority is inextricable from the topology of the thing’s materiality, such that the thing and the void it shelters are intertwined. As much as this reading of contemporary sculpture challenges the core meaning of the artwork, and by analogy, the inner sanctum as the locus of subjectivity, it also conflicts with the reductionism of many theories of the postmodern in which things, and art in particular, are treated as superficial commodities. Parvu counters the frequent presumption that postmodern sculpture is vacuous or voided as a mere simulacrum, with the complex notion of the ‘extimity’ of corporeal life, be it that of the thing, the artwork, or the viewer. She thereby shows how artists such as Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Rachel Whiteread, and Gabriel Orozco unfix hard and fast distinctions between art objects and commodities, and directs an inquiry into the material surfaces in and around which all things are defined.

Where Parvu’s essay mobilizes things within a topological turn, Bronwen Wilson considers the ‘thingly’ nature of early modern moral portraits and how the material entrenchment of the portrait in the visual field of the viewer is the basis for a crucial revision of how physiognomies have been and can be interpreted. Wilson’s analysis of the late portraits of Giovanni Battista Moroni is not only attentive to historical debates about the legibility of the sitter’s face, and to what extent it could disclose the sitter’s interiority, it also identifies the methodological pitfalls of interpreting portraits through statements about the artist’s style or biographic information about the artist, the sitter, or the making of the artwork. That is to say, she parleys Heidegger’s challenge to scientific method in ‘The Thing,’ into a questioning of the way in which scholarly discourse circles between the identity of the artist, stylistic criteria, and the inner-life of the sitter, using each to solidify the sitter’s physiognomy as an object of knowledge.

The relationship between the portrait and the beholder, in Wilson’s essay, is distinctly ethical, in the Heideggerian sense that the artwork impels an ongoing responsiveness from the beholder. By addressing Moroni’s naturalistic
portraits as both realistic images and resistant things, Wilson takes issue with the ways his style was construed pejoratively in the historical tradition of portraiture. But it is precisely because his portraits link the physiognomies of the sitters to the opacity of things in a common visual field that Moroni’s realism solicits the viewer into a protracted conversation. The reciprocal engagement between painting and beholder must be considered somatic rather than the physiognomic, an acknowledgment of the sitter rather than a knowledge and classification of his attributes. In doing so, Wilson disputes the implicit physiognomic underpinnings of art historical interpretation, and posits a new approach to writing art’s history by reconsidering the relationship between the portrait and the viewer as an ethical demand that binds and mutually defines the object and the viewing subject – the ethical relation understood as ontological.

Techniques of World-Making

Evidently, taking Heidegger’s ontology seriously as an avenue to an ethics of interpretation poses methodological challenges. This involves contesting the drive to produce a methodology that could account for all art, visual and material culture, as though this were even the ambition of the discipline. If art, for Heidegger, sets up a world and instigates the unconcealment of truth, any method that situates one artwork in relation to another, as is so often art history’s modus operandi, or one that aspires only to authenticate it, has missed the work entirely. In contrast to situating works in the historical past, often through weak comparative methodologies, we might consider our entanglements with art, and its entanglements with the world. Indeed, Heidegger’s essential critique of the discipline of art history in the early twentieth century – a critique that is nonetheless still relevant today – is that it has based itself on a misguided notion of the ‘preservation’ of art. That is to say, art history threatens to instantiate the work of art in a fixed periodicity, to systematize the aesthetic experience, to codify art into stylistic and iconographic categories that deny its capacity to make a world and draw us into that making. The work of art history, in light of this, should take on a different kind of preservation, one that considers art as the event in and through which history takes place. Art is not simply the window through which to view history, but that which occasions the fundamental rift between the concealment of Dasein and its shining forth. To preserve art is to keep open its capacity to form a world. To write a history of art would therefore not be to apply concepts to objects or to take meaning from representations. It would firstly require an adjustment of stance, a ‘hands-off’ procedure that takes its cue from the imperative to heed the work, rather than to hold it: ‘The preservers of a work belong to its createdness with an essentiality equal to
that of its creators. But it is the work that makes the creators possible in their
essence, the work that by its own essence is in need of preservers.11 Reflection
on the origin of the work of art – for Heidegger the essential question of art’s
historicity – comes down to a co-mingling of its creation (coming into Being),
and its preservation as the grounding of history (its becoming historical).

As much as Heidegger critiques the discipline, he nevertheless sees a
true questioning of art’s history as integral to the work itself. What would it
mean, then, for the discipline to recognize its potential to ‘form a world’ in
and through its engagement with the work of art? If this potential appears
somewhat lofty, one might consider how the terms of world-formation have
been taken up more recently. Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, takes Heidegger’s
notion of world-forming as a point of departure to make a fundamental
distinction between globalization in the age of finance capital and biopolitics
(simply, the mindless reproduction of a homogeneous global market), and
‘mondialization’, a reconnection with the capacity to dwell in the world. In this
instance, to dwell is also to constitute the world, to formulate new horizons,
and even to undertake an aesthetic resensitization, a recurrent theme in Part
II of this collection, ‘Techniques of World-Making’.

If, for Nancy, the political stakes of world-making are fundamentally
bound to the ways we make sense of the world, we might also speculate as
to how, in its delimitation of the world, our sensorial apparatus poses the
possibility of non-human worlds. For philosophers such as Graham Harman,
this question haunts Heidegger’s writing, though it is frequently denied.
Heidegger’s tool analysis and precise distinction between the equipmental
being of the tool (the ready-to-hand) and the eruption of the tool as thing
(the present-at-hand) is more than simply a revelatory event in which the
things of the world become visible. For Harman the very as structure at play
in Heidegger’s writing (for example, the hammer as hammer) is a concerted
attempt to point to the world of things that stretches far beyond human use
or perception, an irreducibly ‘real’ world that we only see in the surfaces that
shine into our horizon of vision. Not only is the world not exclusively human-
oriented (despite seeming to be so in Heidegger’s distinctions between the
worldless stone, the animal that is poor-in-world, and the human as world-
forming) but Dasein precisely is this subterranean contexture of equipment
that is witnessed as tool.

How might speculation on tool-being change our understanding of
aesthetics and interpretation? Michael Golec undertakes an alternative
analysis of van Gogh’s peasant shoes through a rereading of Meyer Schapiro’s
influential 1968 essay, ‘The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger
and van Gogh’, via Graham Harman’s compelling notion of ‘equipmental
strangeness’.12 More subtly, Golec shows how the persistence of a non-human
‘world, hinted at in the shadowy excess of things, becomes an imperative to
redirect visual and material culture studies to new horizons. His essay guides
the reader from Heidegger and Schapiro’s ruminations on van Gogh’s peasant shoes to a radicalized account of the material culture and political realities generated by the pervasive but unseen operations of agricultural technology in its modernization in the late nineteenth century. Here, the peasant insinuated by the shoes is mobilized as an extension of that equipment, a human-body-agriculture machine that is entangled in a ‘cultural-techno-system’. This particular phrasing deftly brings speculative realism to bear on art history and visual culture by reading Heidegger’s notion of Gestell, the enframing of modern technology, in direct connection with acts of representation that materialize an exchange of gazes between objects and viewers. More strongly, we see that objects do not simply disrupt the subject’s look with their own gaze as Lacan describes, but perceive one another between themselves. In this way, Golec takes issue with the humanistic orientation of scholarship in visual culture, presenting the obscurity of the thing as a challenge to understanding things through anthropocentric metaphors such as structures of signification, economies of circulation, and networks of communication.

Insofar as the shadowy excess of the thing opens up new worlds and new relationalities, which lead to a disaggregation of history and meaning, the question arises, how can a world history of art be conceived differently? How might institutions situate their objects within a collection while taking into consideration a notion of ‘thingliness’ that accounts for their indigestible difference? Insofar as the thing’s materiality disperses pre-given cultural histories, it also demands a redistribution of objects into new configurations. It is precisely this redistribution that gets to a more fecund sense of historicity. How might such an organization begin, and depart from, Heidegger’s tautology of the origin of art as world history, and a history of Being as pathway to the origin of art? How does art history and its institutions do justice to the elusive and excessive origin of art that opens up a history that is not merely in a culture or historical moment, when we are so often driven to confirm and stabilize objects precisely within these parameters? Philip Tonner considers these questions with a discussion of how to move forward from analyzing the art object simply through Heidegger’s dialectic of the ready-to-hand (its use as equipment) and the present-at-hand (its thingliness), to thinking it through the context of a material world history. Positioning Heidegger’s elucidation of origin as the essence of the work of art in contrast to Georges Bataille’s account of origin through prehistoric painting, Tonner establishes a notion of the work of art as material enshrinement. This discussion lays the ground for a reorganization of the museum in such a way that it would allow all manner of ‘things’ – artworks, antiquities, objects of natural history, and artifacts from diverse times and places – to be placed in relation to one another, and through this material and sensual juxtaposition, to propose a world history.
To speak of ‘techniques’ of world-making is necessarily to raise, as Heidegger does, the common root of art and technology in technē. If art is an exemplary form of world-making, it is one that comes to pass shoulder to shoulder with technology. As Diarmuid Costello explains in his essay, art and technology are both modes of disclosure, the former, which reveals physis, our earthly basis, precisely by preserving it, and the latter, which seeks to expose its hidden operations. This distinction becomes crucial to the work of contemporary artist, Richard Long, whose practice offers an alternative to the technological framing of nature. In Costello’s account, Long’s attentiveness to wind and other elemental forces requires a change in disposition or mode of comportment. Minute variations of demeanor (scuffing, stamping, kicking, and so forth) recast movement and take on new significance in terms of the way in which body and earth engage in the activity of world-making. Thus, the artist’s practice of walking is not simply a form of performance or conceptual art, it is a reflection on the extent to which everyday activity participates in, and is touched by, the disclosure of the world. Poesis therefore provides an account of contemporary practice that does not rely on stylistic categories (such as conceptual art or performance art), but instead shows how the performance of a daily practice interacts with the lived experience and vice versa.

Heidegger’s Unthought History of Art

One of the purposes of this book is to consider how Heidegger’s work challenges our most accepted approaches to interpretation. It is also an occasion to rethink them in terms of ontology, ethics, disposition, perception, possible worlds, and acts of world-formation. No less important than the interpretation of art, though, is the very question of history. Indeed, this book would not be complete without an appraisal of what history means to the discipline in the wake of Heidegger. Part III, ‘Heidegger’s Unthought History of Art’ therefore has two mutually supportive approaches to the assessment of Heidegger’s impact on the discipline’s understanding of history. The essays in this section offer an account of Heidegger’s relationship to art history and theory, both in terms of his actual influence on significant figures and with a view to showing how a Heideggerian approach to art history changes the terms by which we write a history with and for works of art.

In What Is Called Thinking? Heidegger claims that the work of thinking takes place not simply through the articulation of thoughts but also in the weight and emphasis of our preoccupations. The full scope of thinking therefore encompasses a dimension of potential, that he calls ‘the unthought’. He writes, ‘What is unthought in a thinker’s thought is not a lack inherent in his thought. What is un-thought is there in each case only as the un-thought.”
The more original the thinking, the richer will be what is unthought in it. The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow. One might think that, the word ‘unthought’ is grammatically privative, that is to say, inflected in the negative sense. But it is privative in an altered sense common with Heidegger’s terminology, in which the negative word can indicate the positive, and the positive word can indicate the negative. Thus, the unthought is not something negative or other than thought, but rather its very ambition and possibility. The unthought is the vanguard of a thought that a thinker projects into the world, but which she or he has not quite caught up with, sidestepped, or even overstepped. It is the inevitable result of an originary thinking that is simultaneously an emergence, a leap, a step back, and an excess of thought. Contrary to popular belief, the shape of the hermeneutic movement in Heidegger’s writing is not exclusively circular: it is a movement that rocks back and forth, leaps, skips, and zigzags. The untimely nature of the unthought – and its interpretive instability – cannot be reduced to any given time, and thus our history is never about the past but rather about possible presents and futures.

It would not be an understatement, then, to suggest that a sensitive engagement with the history of art has the potential to disclose the very movement, rhythms, moods, and moments of Being. Moreover, to engage the movement of Being is precisely to acknowledge its historicity, or more precisely, to acknowledge it as historicity. This predicament is at stake in the very naming of the discipline. Consider the many permutations: art history, history of art, history in art, and so forth. Heidegger’s work urges us towards a sustained reflection on the of in the history of art or in the work of art.

Heidegger often plays on the relationship between the objective and subjective genitive, in order to provoke us to see that art’s history is not something external to it – something that art is simply in – but rather that art itself has its own historicity. As part of his interest in the possibilities of art’s capacity for world disclosure, he addresses the discipline’s fundamental terms, art and history, asking us to reflect on how they constitute its unity and division in and as its very possibility of self-definition. Such fundamental questioning is most welcome at a time when the very terms ‘art’ and ‘history’ are being challenged in the form of visual culture, which aims to strike a revision of the discipline’s ambitions and possibilities. Equally, we can consider the recent push towards a global or world art history, which would seem to have very different things in mind than Heidegger’s lifelong reflection on the concept of ‘world’, but which could certainly be enriched by it. This book seizes these trajectories in order to think what the work of visual analysis might entail for our worlds now and in the future.

The relationship between art and history comes together in the sharpest and most sustained manner in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, which was written in multiple versions between 1935 and 1936. In it, Heidegger makes
the crucial claim that ‘Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history.’18 For Heidegger, art and architecture are not always already ‘in’ history, not to mention an ‘art history’, but rather they open up a history to come. In his example of the Greek temple, he writes that through its work, it opens up a world, and in doing so it sets up modes of Being and relationality that never existed before.19 For Heidegger, ‘world-entry has the characteristic of happening, of history’, and he calls this entrance into world by beings ‘primal history’ (Urgeschichte).20 His commitment to art as the most compelling example of the disclosure of world history is unwavering, and it enables him to make the seemingly radical claim, in the first version of ‘On the Origin of the Work of Art’, that there is no such thing as prehistoric art, for as soon as there is art, there is an opening up of history and world and thus, ‘art can only be or not be as historical’.21

What history has to tell us is not primarily about influences, causality, or even a sequence in time of events, but how art forms disclose and dispose worlds of meaning and sense. If art history is partially an archaeological science, its emphasis should be on what Giorgio Agamben has called, ‘The moment of arising, the archē of archaeology’. This moment, what Heidegger calls the Ursprung (primal leap), is that by which one leaves the past and truly enters the historical.22 The Ursprung, with its sense not only of origin and leaping forward but also ‘surging up’, suggests that Heidegger’s focus is on the coming-into-Being of the work of art, and concomitantly, its inauguration or entry into history. Its possible lostness, decline, or fading away is not extrinsic to this coming-into-Being, but rather part of its unavoidable moment of arrival. Heidegger later characterizes this emergence as the ‘claim of the incipient’.23 Such a claim can never be subordinated to any given time; it can happen at any time, and thus has very little to do with chronological order: ‘Whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over.’24 Even when Heidegger writes that '(t)he inception of our history is the Greeks', he is not simply claiming that they are the earliest to influence us in fundamental ways, but rather that this originary moment is still with us – that it remains originary – only if we are attuned to how it harbors ‘uncompleted decisions within itself’.25 Nietzsche simply calls this the ‘untimely’ dimension of the Greeks.

Heidegger contrasts this conception of art’s relationship to history, with the prevailing ambition to make art history a ‘scientific’ discipline, a tendency that emerged in the 1870s and 1880s in Austria and Germany and was legitimized when it became an official faculty in the university system by the first decades of the twentieth century. In a brief but astute critique of the discipline in the ‘Six Basic Developments in the History of Aesthetics’, from *The Will to Power as Art*, written during the same time period as ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, he bemoans the transformation of Johan Gottfried Herder and Johann Maria Winckelmann’s understanding of art as a ‘magnificent
self-meditation’ on historical existence into the ‘discovery and investigation of mere developments in art history’, a movement clearly seen as coextensive with its further professionalization and institutionalization as an academic discipline. Although Heidegger is willing to brook exceptions here – he specifically mentions Hippolyte Taine and Jacob Burckhardt – by and large he sees a foreclosure of the ambitions of the discipline in its commitment to the ‘technique of historiography’, his term for the investigations of an objectivized history of data, deeds, and facts that was increasingly identified with the historical as such.

But this was not Heidegger’s last word on the discipline of art history, and it was definitely not his first. Although not well known, Heidegger wrote a much more detailed and prescient consideration of the nascent field of art history in his early lecture course, *Ontology: – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* from 1923. In it, he, like his contemporary Walter Benjamin, considered art history to be at the forefront of the historical human sciences: ‘the history of art has undergone the most development and … the other disciplines have the tendency to imitate it when possible’. For Heidegger, the discipline of art history was exemplary in regards to the development of a ‘historiological consciousness’ – that is to say, in its attentiveness to the present’s relationship to the past, and the degree to which that relationship saturates all modes of interpretation and experience. Although Heidegger takes the discipline of art history seriously because of its attention to past forms of life, it also exemplifies the most extreme version of the underlying scientific ambitions of the historical human sciences: an understanding of history in terms of objective notions of time, predicated on causality, temporal flow, and the succession of events. If, for Heidegger, history is what we are and what we bear, then he was highly critical of practices of history that saw it as something merely past, and existing as a stagnant body of facts or forms from which we might derive information. Furthermore, art history potentially fostered a visualizing mode of objectification (an aesthetics) that dovetailed and enabled the pursuit of pseudoscientific and archaeological aspirations to classify and compare the objects and objectifications of psychosocial expression via concepts of style, morphology, and culture. Even at this early date, one can see the roots of Heidegger’s later statement that ‘Art-historical study makes the works the objects of a science’.

At this time, in the early 1920s, Heidegger saw art history as the perfect amalgam of a historiological consciousness and modern life philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), which he saw developing in the work of Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Georg Simmel, Oswald Spengler, and Heinrich Dilthey. These were the two nineteenth-century achievements that Heidegger simultaneously admired and submitted to trenchant critique in the early 1920s. His engagement with both prepared the way for his alternative ‘hermeneutics of facticity’ and his ‘analytic of Dasein’, which
he brought to fruition in *Being and Time*[^31]. He admired how these thinkers emphasized concrete existence over detached theorizing, and that their interest in ‘life’ was not primarily dictated by scientific biology, but by an attention to historical interpretation that was intrinsic to concrete existence. But he was also critical of how such thinking tended to devolve into modes of objectification based on the scientific methodology of the natural sciences and traditional epistemology, while simultaneously resorting to forms of ‘irrationalism’, either in terms of the fetishization of inchoate creative forces, or practices of empathic psychologizing, which blunted any attempt to take the pulse of the movement of life in its full historicity.

In its synthesis of historiological consciousness and modern life philosophy, art history’s mode of approaching and unfolding its objects was the precursor to works like Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918–22), which had a substantial impact on Heidegger and many others that is difficult to fathom today. In fact, both Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer claimed that it was the art historian Karl Lamprecht, who first mobilized the tools of morphology and psychology to track the forms of culture across time and space, that were later put to use in Spengler’s morphological account of how forms of thought were relative to the cultural reality in which they were expressed. But if Heidegger was also a very harsh critic of Spengler’s predictive approach – based on his biological notions of culture as an organism, in which the totality of the historical past as a myriad of cultural forms, could be charted, compared, and anticipated in terms of their future paths of growth and decline – then that was not exclusively art history’s fault[^32].

In an interesting turn, Heidegger claims that the other historical human sciences – here he specifically names religion, economic history, legal history, and the history of philosophy – are often unaware that they are emulating art history’s specific possibility of conducting research, by importing concepts such as morphology, style, and type. In order to elevate their own disciplines, they imitate art history, ‘instead of each particular discipline focusing, as history of art itself does, on its own object, the character of its Being, and the appropriate possibility of gaining access to it and defining it’.[^33] Heidegger follows this astonishing sentence, by suggesting that to imitate art history is to misuse it, to have little regard for it and to misunderstand it. But, of course, that does not mean that art history is not prone to misunderstanding itself in many of the same ways. Heidegger ends this rich section with a cryptic parenthesis: ‘(History of art – why genuine in this regard (style, form, expression)? Its object: also the “classifying”! Still a lack of clarity here, obvious what tasks lie ahead).’[^34] The suggestion is that if art history risks defaulting to systems of classification (according to time period or cultural geography) while forgetting the subtlety of its potential for historical consciousness and its aesthetic eye, then we must approach the discipline with a different tone and emphasis.
One might surmise at the very least that Heidegger is suggesting that when art history and art historians are at their best – when they allow themselves to encounter the work of art in its exuberant facticity and historicity – they are engaged in opening worlds of sense and meaning, which are attentive to art as a disclosive event that reveals the full facticity and historicity of Being. But often it seemed that the discipline was all too willing to embrace a caricature of its own ambitions in seeing the historical past as finished, and thus its self-imposed task to identify the ‘temporally particular style of a culture’ – its stylistically unified forms of expression – that can be then classified and compared with an ‘eye to form’. When Heidegger claims that art historical study makes art works the objects of a science, he clearly has in mind an art history engaged in modes of pseudoscientific analysis, classification and empathic psychologizing as a way of accessing lost life worlds, cultures, or civilizations indexed by the work of art. Heidegger puts this nicely in his lecture course *Parmenides* (1942–43), when he notes that art should not be understood as an ‘expression of culture or as a witness to the creative potential of man. Our focus is how the work of art itself lets Being appear and brings Being into unconcealedness*. He was adamant that culture was the death of art, and that, for example, the Greeks were not a ‘culture-creating people’ nor were they familiar with the likes of creative genius – both inventions of the modern period – thus they did not have ‘experiences’, nor did they expect such things of their art.

Although at times harsh, Heidegger offered a fully articulated response to early developments in the history of art, and a prescient account of its roots in specific nineteenth-century sensibilities. But by the time Heidegger wrote the first version of ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, his critical but careful analysis of the discipline and its cognate apparatuses was reduced to a brittle dismissal. Perhaps that was to be expected. After all, the first venue for this essay was a year-long lecture series held at the Freiburg Society for Art Historical Study on the ‘The Origins and Beginnings of Art’, and it is clear that Heidegger’s notion of the relationship between art and history – not to mention origins and beginnings – was at odds with most art historians’ conception of their discipline’s constitutive terms. In ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, museum collections, curators, dealers, art exhibitions, and the discipline itself are now seen as fully complicit in the conversion of art into an aesthetic object for the art industry and an object of science for art-historical study. Of course, the connections between museums, exhibitions, and the production of art historical knowledge are not unfounded – far from it, as Donald Preziosi, and many others, have demonstrated. But it is evident that Heidegger’s account of their intertwining is not taken up in this essay in a sufficiently complex way. Yet, like many of Heidegger’s statements, his stark dismissal is subtended by a much more ambivalent and complex relationship to the discipline.
We know from the written account of his first trip to Greece in 1962 with his wife Elfride that when he did encounter works of Greek art in the Museums of Olympia and the Acropolis, he clearly saw them as preserving, albeit tenuously, whatever ‘shining appearance’ remained from those ancient works amidst the abundance of objects and forms stored and displayed in its richly laden collections. His worry, of course, was that what still shone was only the shine itself, and therefore those works neither conceal nor reveal anything at all. But if the shining of truth that he was after was gone, he could certainly sense and appreciate its afterglow in such places. Although the Greek temples and its sculptures were still there for him to see on his three trips to Greece in his later years – some of them still in situ – their world had departed. As he articulated it in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, ‘although these artwork are still amongst us, their mode of existence, their way of Being in the world, are forever tinged by the recognition that world withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone’. This mood of constitutive loss is reinforced by the specter of Hegel in that essay, which is made explicit in its epilogue. Heidegger acknowledges the validity of Hegel’s claim in the *Philosophy of Art*, that ‘art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself … In all these relationships art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past’. Yet he does not embrace Hegel’s belief that art was definitely and definitively fated to forgo that possibility in the future.

This sense of the artwork’s simultaneously being here and gone has fostered the notion of melancholy and mourning as the very mood of the discipline of art history. Although most fully articulated in other texts, Heidegger does raise the issue of mood in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, noting that it is often more intelligently perceptive and open to Being than other modes of reason and reasoning. In fact, one of the primary ways Heidegger rethinks ‘historical determination’ away from crude accounts of causality and temporal flow, is through the notion of mood, or fundamental attunement (*Grundstimmung*). Through moods the world opens up to us in our fundamental receptivity. Moods are disclosive of our ‘Being-in-the-world’. We might consider embracing the concept of mood or fundamental attunement as a compelling way to think about art and its historicity without necessarily accepting melancholy as the discipline’s primary disposition.

With this in mind, we can grasp the relevance of Matthew Bowman’s essay on Heidegger’s concept of ‘de-distancing’ (*Ent-fernung*). Sometimes translated into English as ‘nearing’, de-distancing poses a challenge to modes of historical distancing, particularly the elegiac mood of melancholy that seems to constitute art history’s vision of itself, and its mode of relating to its objects. Bowman engages and critiques the dominant claim that the mood of art history and its attachment to its lost objects is fundamentally melancholic. He argues that historical distancing is what Heidegger would call a basic concept for art history, albeit at times an unthought one; it delimits its region
of objects as a whole according to a single, leading aspect. Bowman’s essay is thus in conversation with Michael Ann Holly, whose influential writings have argued that the mood of art historical writing is derived from a melancholic connection to an absent past through a material presence. It would be fair to say that many art historians see ‘distancing’ as the fundamental disciplining mechanism that has, for better or for worse, shaped art history’s conception of itself.

The all-encompassing visual and technical form of that basic concept of historical distancing is the ‘world picture’ of one-point perspective, which sets up a metaphysics of space that privileges a proper visual and interpretive distance in order to construct a measured relationship between a knowing subject and known object. Bowman’s essay engages, implicitly and explicitly, with recent work that explores how issues of historical distance and loss are constitutive of the discipline of art history. For example, the English translation of Georges Didi-Huberman’s book, *Devant l’image: questions posées aux fins d’une histoire de l’art*, begins with an introductory chapter that claims that Erwin Panofsky, was responsible for the development of an art history involved in ‘reasonable distances’, ‘safety measures’, and ‘exorcisms’ that work to keep the more unruly and disruptive aspects of history, temporality, and affective engagements with art and history at bay. To a great degree this argument is predicated on Panofsky’s supposed turning away from thinkers such as Heidegger in his earlier work, to a more positivistic approach after his move to America. As Bowman makes clear, Heidegger’s understanding of de-distancing is meant to critique calculating modes of distance that ignore our imbrication with the world, and its ethical implications. And it is precisely moods that enable us to overcome the hard and fast separation of object and subject without having to resort to feelings, interior psychic states, or overly subjective modes of projection such as empathy.

What would an art history that was attentive to mood, and not simply melancholy, look like? It might enable us to move beyond literal, metaphoric, or merely rhetorical treatments of art historical texts, towards matters of their inflection. Heidegger’s mode of writing – its attentiveness to alliteration and assonance, tautology, rhythmic repetition, and the complex use of grammatical tenses, not simply as dry exercises in grammatical play but also in terms of pitch, tonality, timbre – creates a particular attunement for the reader that affects us in bodily ways. An attention to mood would also impact the larger periodizing and comparative dimensions of the discipline. In many ways moods are ‘epochal’, in the way they found spatio-temporal worlds. Mood might enable us to shift emphasis away from issues of intentionality and causality to other forms of relationality such as resonance, echo, reverberation, and mirroring.

We already have some models for such an art history. In his ‘Little History of Photography’, Walter Benjamin claims that the history of photography begins
in a fog. Throughout this account, he never tries to dispel that obscurity, but rather suggests how we are unable to attest to a specific origin, much like the coming into appearance of a photograph being developed in which the objects surge up at various points like peaks from a blanket of clouds. Joseph Leo Koerner’s book, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, is an exemplary unfolding of the issue of weather as a correlate of mood, in regards to how clouds conceal and reveal worlds in Friedrich’s *Wanderer by the Sea*. Peter Sloterdijk’s three-volume work on ‘spheres’, is a fundamental rethinking of Heidegger’s Being-in-the-world, in terms of Being and Space, in which atmosphere and the fundamental mood of boredom are thought about in relationship to modern architecture and dwelling. We could, indeed, go back to Johann Maria Winckelmann’s claim that it is the atmosphere of Greece; its particular clarity of sun and sky, not to mention its homoerotic mood, that was formative for Greek art and architecture.

Heidegger was deeply engaged with the mood of art history from practically the beginning of his career. In the record of his first trip to Greece in 1962, he mentions the importance for him of the archaeologist/art historian Ernst Buschor’s lectures on Greek Sculpture at the University of Freiburg in the early 1920s. He also had close connections to the art historian Hans Jantzen, for whom he provided the eulogy at his funeral. He wrote the introduction to the art historian Marielen Putscher’s book on Raphael’s Sistine Madonna. His work also had a profound effect on Kurt Bauch, Jan Aler, Georg Schmidt, and Theodor Hetzer. The art historian Wiegand Petzet was perhaps Heidegger’s closest friend – aside from his brother Hermann Heidegger – and the chapter, ‘Heidegger’s Association with Art’, in Petzet’s book, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger*, is still one of the most informative with regards to his engagements with art and art history.

Heidegger’s involvement with art historians, and art history, intensified upon his return to the University of Freiburg from Marburg in 1928 to take up the chair of philosophy. A year earlier, Kurt Bauch was appointed Privatdozent in Art History, and in the same year that Heidegger took up the Rectorship of Freiburg University under the Nazi regime in 1933, Bauch assumed the chair of art history. They participated together in lectures and seminars on art history and philosophy, including the 1935–36 colloquium on ‘overcoming aesthetics in the question of art’. In a dedication to his recently deceased friend and colleague in a book of collected essays, *Wegmarken*, Heidegger writes, ‘Our fruitful friendship, based in our mutual participation in lectures and seminars on art history and philosophy, stood the test of time. The encouragement received from our close companionship of thoughtful inquiry moves me to dedicate this collection of texts – a series of stops under way in the single question of Being – to my deceased friend’. We now have the recently published correspondence between the two that attests to that ‘close companionship of thoughtful inquiry’, as well as Bauch’s essay,
'Art History and Contemporary Philosophy', which he contributed to the Festschrift celebrating Heidegger’s sixtieth birthday.\(^{60}\)

It is highly relevant, then, that Michael Gnehm’s essay deals with the relationship between Heidegger and Bauch, concentrating on the latter’s writings on the historical significance of Martin Schongauer, and most particularly on his engravings, and Heidegger’s parallel discussion of Albrecht Dürer’s famous watercolor, *The Hare*.\(^{61}\) Gnehm explores the concept of historicity as that relates to their respective interpretations of visual art. The issue of history in Heidegger is, as we have already shown, extremely complicated due to the multiple words and phrases that he uses to talk about various modes of history. Further, it is in this essay that we see the full complexity of the political terrain of Heidegger’s philosophy. For example, Heidegger’s notion of origin, as both a peoples’ historicity and its leap into the future is suffused with militaristic language: the beginning ‘invades’ the future; the work of art ‘transports’ a people to its appointed task; its destining or ‘mission’ is an ‘entry’ into a peoples’ endowment. While Heidegger was actively critical of the crude alignment of German art history with Nazi Party lines, his writings on art are nevertheless replete with connotations of occupation, and the imperative to take hold of the German past and its destiny in the face of historical ‘danger’. Central to both Heidegger and Bauch was the ambition to bring out the destining (*Geschick*) aspect of history at the heart of the historical. Thus, both authors were deeply critical of standard art historical accounts of either Dürer or Schongauer’s place in the German past with regards to the development of naturalism, and their respective stylistic genealogies. Bauch argues for the ‘anticipatory’ and ‘eschatological’ nature of Schongauer’s art, which does not merely look forward or backward, but is indicative of a history to come that is revealed in an untimely fashion in the visual features of the engravings, such as the gazes and countenances, as well as in the very act of engraving, which in its selective re-presentation as retrieval and interpretation, is a model for an approach to art history attentive to the historicity of history itself. For his part, Heidegger was developing an argument about the historical nature of Dürer’s work at the same time he was working through his understanding of historicity in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’. In fact, both Heidegger and Bauch gave talks at the Freiburg Society for Art, in which the theme was ‘The Origin and Beginning of Art’. It was here that Heidegger gave his first version of his ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ on November 13, 1935, and Bauch gave his paper on ‘The Early Style of Artists’, a few months later.\(^{62}\) Heidegger’s interpretation of Dürer’s *The Hare* is not simply a sophisticated account of an artwork, but rather a demonstration of how works of art are the best instantiation of the fate of Being, a conviction that he was beginning to explore as far back as 1923.\(^{63}\) The historicity of art as located in the dialogue between Heidegger’s Dürer and Bauch’s Schongauer, is more politically charged, heterogeneous, and fertile than it is often credited for.
Like Gnehm’s account of Heidegger and Bauch, Lori Johnson’s essay is also concerned with how art unfolds an ontological movement, a coming-into-Being, that cannot be reduced to or addressed by our understanding of the work of art as a completed aesthetic object available for us to talk about, historicize, or explain. Or, to put it another way, if art history often claims to be interested in the meaning of works of art, it often risks explaining them away, moving from them rather than in rhythm with them. To counter this, Johnson considers the Heideggerian notion of dwelling in order to engage in a reflection on the relationship between the work of art and art historical practice. Johnson’s claim is that dwelling is the best way of characterizing the kind of address that would enable us to engage in an encounter with the work of art in its ontological fullness.

To do so, she concentrates on Pierre Bonnard’s lithographs for the 1900 edition of Paul Verlaine’s *Parallèlement*, published by Ambroise Vollard. One cannot help but think of Johnson’s attention to *Parallèlement* as an acknowledgment that, in her reading, this work does not seem to fulfill any of the traditional art historical techniques – homology, analogy, synchronism, and parallelism – that Heidegger names specifically, in his critique of the discipline’s traditional drive to classify and compare forms of expression. She rearticulates a worry that Heidegger also held, that issues of historiography – reflections on or about history or the disciple itself – would overwhelm our attentiveness to the historicity of the work of art. Johnson rigorously avoids the temptation of inserting the *Parallèlement* in any of its pre-given contexts: that of the ‘livre de peinture’, the illustrated book, a history of styles, or any other given biographical or psychological details.

Heidegger was convinced that it was the artwork that provided the best manifestation of the creative upsurge and movement of Being, and that art history should be guided by its ‘work’ and not the other way around. This sense of the artwork is what Heidegger called *poesis*. But what exactly does it mean to say, as Heidegger does, that, ‘all art is poetry’? In *Parallèlement* language – poetry in this case – does not explain the images, and neither do the images illustrate the text. Language does not subtend or supervene on the work of art to tame and master its exuberance, but rather it is an engaged participant at the very same limit of the opening up of a world of sense and signification. The images do not represent or reproduce the text but rather exist and move in mutual acknowledgment with it, ‘Echo to Echo’, as Braque once inscribed in a birthday card to Heidegger. Bonnard’s interpretation of Verlaine’s poems proceeds by the same meandering path as the poems themselves, and they intertwine such that the text is bodied forth by the image, and the image is exscribed. The work of art provides a model for the *poesis* of art historical work; a sonorous and resonant responsiveness to the movements of art-Being. Here the artwork is not just the origin of the artist but also of the art historian. Johnson’s essay points towards a fundamental rupture in the aesthetic experience that occurs in Bonnard’s lithographs in the interplay between reading the text of the poem and perceiving the graphic image.
Making Claims and Aesthetic Judgment

It is well known that Heidegger’s ontology of art was implicated in a full-scale critique of modern aesthetics. But this does not mean that Heidegger had no concern for aesthetic experience at all. Part IV, ‘Making Claims and Aesthetic Judgment’, attempts to show that, in the right light, Heideggerian ontology calls forth alternative modes of aesthetic judgment. Equally, aesthetic judgment cannot be divorced from ontological claims, be that the claim an object has on us, or the claim that we have on an object. Ontological statements and aesthetic judgments are not antithetical. To the contrary, they occupy different facets of a shared perceptual ground.

For Heidegger, not only did art history seem to scientize itself by turning art works into objects at hand for visual inspection and classification, but it was also fundamentally guided by an aesthetic relationship to that art. According to Heidegger, modern aesthetics on the one hand gives primacy to sensation, but on the other hand attempts to turn these feelings into objective criteria. That is to say, modern aesthetics conceals our primary perception of the world through so-called objective criteria by the same operation that conceals Being in a technological worldview in the modern age. Heidegger saw Kant’s Critique of Judgment as an instauration of this modern aesthetic regime, and traced this misguided approach to both aesthetics and technology back to the Greeks, and, more specifically, to Plato.

The translation of being as physis into eidos by Plato – and translated by Heidegger into German as aussehen (‘outward appearance’ or ‘look’) – inaugurates a notion of Being as something present-at-hand in front of us, to be seen as an object for a subject, and creates the primordial conditions for an aesthetic relationship to art. In this way, the aesthetic relationship to art is of a piece with the Gestell of technological domination. A certain conception of Being initiated the realm of enframing and, indeed, Heidegger writes that ‘the Being that defines the modern period – Being as enframing – stems from the Western destiny of Being’. Thus, seeing the world as a picture is already evident in Plato’s eidos. With physis interpreted as eidos, art becomes a domain of representation that is challenged forth to a human subject. For Heidegger, the modern era is marked by the collapse of art into aesthetics, anthropology, and culture, and against this ‘subjectivist’ aesthetic he argues for an ontology of art.

The domination of an aesthetic approach to art since at least the classical age meant that, as far as Heidegger was concerned, art was no longer a primary bearer of truth. Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics are the culminating achievement of the recognition and utterance of that predicament. Although Heidegger clearly adhered to Hegel’s basic claim that great art was a thing of the past, however, he did not necessarily agree that great art could not reappear in the present or future. Nor does this mean that his conception of art is
anti-aesthetic, although it is easy to see how one might come to such a conclusion on the evidence of the vast majority of his manifest statements. One could even say that one of the most important things to take away from Heidegger is the absolute necessity that aesthetics should be intrinsic to the history of art, and that art history should be seen as intrinsic to any full-bodied sense of aesthetic judgment.

Part of the problem here is taking Heidegger’s critique of the modern aesthetic regime of art in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ as his definitive statement about aesthetics, without looking at his other writings from the mid-1930s. In the section, ‘Six Basic Developments in the History of Aesthetics’, from The Will to Power of Art, the first of Heidegger’s famous Nietzsche lectures delivered between 1936 and 1937, Heidegger offers a very different reading of Kant’s notion of disinterestedness. He claims that a misreading of Kantian aesthetics in the nineteenth century has dominated our understanding of aesthetic judgment. Kant’s definition of the beautiful as the object of ‘disinterested’ delight should not be taken as ‘non-willing’ (Schopenhauer) or its apparent opposite, ‘rapture’ (Nietzsche), but rather in terms of a state of non-possession, non-calculation, and non-control. In Heidegger’s words, ‘Comportment towards the beautiful as such’, says Kant, is ‘unconstrained favoring (freie Gunst). We must release what encounters us as such to its way to be; we must allow and grant it what belongs to it and what it brings to us.’ In the sentence following, he characterizes this unconstrained favoring as ‘free granting’ (freie Bewahren). Kantian disinterest, therefore, held a certain aesthetic potential for Heidegger.

In his essay on the photorealist paintings of Richard Estes, Aron Vinegar posits a reinterpretation of the way art undertakes this free granting of the world. Tracing the development of Heidegger’s optical term Reluzenz, Vinegar shows how Estes’s paintings recover the forgotten potential of relucence, through a careful account of the dominant feature of Estes’s paintings – the complex play of reflections off a multitude of urban surfaces. In contrast to the dominant postmodern, anti-realist, and Baudrillardian interpretative matrix through which photorealism has been understood, Vinegar shows how these reflections are not a ‘hall of mirrors’, but rather a mirror play in which the city takes images of itself, alluding to a reality that cannot be reduced to human perception or the play of signifiers. Thus, Estes’s paintings explore what Vinegar calls ‘object-acts’ of perception. In a counterintuitive move, he goes on to enlist Baudrillard as an ally, along with Heidegger and Harman, in his realist interpretation of Estes’s work. The city is neither a spectacle, nor a simulacrum, but is instead the occasion for an opening to its aesthetic plenitude, and the irreducibility of the beings that construct its reality.

Heidegger’s reinterpretation of Kant’s reflective judgment in terms of more receptive modes of aesthetic comportment and apprehending [vernehmen] resonates with his conception of experience and receptivity in Greek art.
A Heideggerian aesthetics (if we could call it that), moves beyond a subject-object relationship towards a condition in which one might say there is a pivot, so that the work of art now begins to look at us, and provides us with our outlook, rather than us seeing it in terms of its outer appearance, or *eidos*. Thus rather than being inimical, there is, in fact, a strong affinity between *poesis* and Kantian aesthetics. Although Heidegger still ultimately believes that Kant’s aesthetics remains beholden to a modern concept of the subject, it is clear that in the depth of his interpretation of the *Critique of Judgment*, he saw that it was integral rather than opposite to his understanding that ‘the aesthetic state is neither subjective or objective.’

The extent to which an interpretation is subjective or objective is precisely the domain that Amanda Boetzkes’s essay brings to bear on the respective obdurate and recessive conditions of equipmentality, and alternately, the present-at-hand thing. She considers how the work of Nam June Paik, Jeff Koons, and Erwin Wurm embarks on a radicalized understanding of the object-world, and co-extensively, the ways in which art becomes visible or remains invisible. These artists are not just interested in making objects and old technologies visible in their dysfunction and uselessness, but rather in showing the excess of the object from the dilemma of use and function altogether. More precisely, the ‘allure’ of objects in their relations opens up onto other worlds of meaning and sense. She brings Heidegger’s tool analysis, and its rereading through Graham Harman, to bear on the psychologist James J. Gibson’s ecological model of perception, and most notably his concept of ‘affordance’.

If Gibson’s notion of affordance suggests that we perceive objects within an ecological environment – an ambience of cues, visual angles, occlusions, and placements that enable us to test the range of possible meanings and actions that an environment might yield – then this is strikingly close to Heidegger’s interest in the inseparability of an object with its environing world. Following the trajectory of these ideas, Boetzkes argues that art does not simply occasion aesthetic experiences, but more strongly, mobilizes judgments as bodily conditions and dispositions.

Objectivity is thus a sustained line of inquiry in this section, and it takes new force in Whitney Davis’s analysis of pictorial perspective. Davis elaborates the underlying question of how subjective perception meets the objective world so crucial to Heidegger’s development, through a compelling account of the ongoing exchange between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, which both preceded and followed the famous Davos debates between the two in 1929. Davis illuminates the centrality of perspective and symbolic form for both thinkers as each navigated his respective understanding of Kant’s metaphysics. Ultimately, Davis shows how Cassirer lay the ground for Heidegger to cut across the distinctions between a strict phenomenology of the subject and an unattainable objectivity. Davis thus makes a case for examining
how perspective is constituted by, and is constitutive of, an interdetermination of original time and original space, a formation that Davis calls ‘original time/space’. The essay accesses this recursive structure by positioning Kant with Erwin Panofsky, Cassirer, Heidegger, and Davis himself, in an indefinite, possibly endless, manifold conversation.

In working through their mutually defining and frequently conflicted approaches to a phenomenology of Being-in-the-world, the question of space (immanence versus distance), and therefore visual perspective, and ultimately pictorial perspective, was at the heart of Cassirer and Heidegger’s exchange. The notion of a linear-perspective pictorial projection that Davis develops offers a symbolic representation of spatiality beyond Dasein – a space that notionally can be infinite – at the same time as it integrates the finite existential space (at the viewpoint) into the unified field of view as present-at-hand in Heidegger’s sense. Thus perspective is not just a representation of space, but rather a succession and recursion in original time/space. One might go so far as to say that the symbolic form of perspective subsumes and supersedes the very distinction between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. The world that is present-at-hand becomes notionally ready-to-hand in the perspective representation, though it remains perpetually out of reach. In perspective projection, all space is ready-to-hand, though at times or places that are existentially foreclosed beyond Dasein.

Part IV brings us to a suitable end that proposes new beginnings for the discipline. This collection invites us to think about how we make claims on our objects, how they make claims on us, how these claims become integrated into our writing and reflections on art, and how this writing sets the tenor of what we do.

Notes


2 This confrontation is not simply aggressive, it is also meant to recognize the strife and division within what is supposedly confronted, as well as the polemos within one’s own thought. It is not only a separation but also a gathering. Thus, confrontation is not just aggressive and willing, but is primarily open and receptive. For a detailed account of Auseinandersetzung in Heidegger’s work, see Gregory Fried, *Heidegger’s Polemos: From Being to Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

3 It would also be a shame to isolate his study to one stage of his interest in the question of Being—the truth of Being, with ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ seen as seminal in this regard—as it would preclude aspects of the topological and hermeneutical aspects of art that he addressed and avoided, and which do not always correspond to any chronological or developmental model.


12 The impact of Schapiro’s essay was secured by Jacques Derrida’s response to it in The Truth in Painting, published in 1978.

13 Moreover, this works the other way as well: after ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ essay, we no longer need to think of things exclusively through the dialectic of ready-to-hand/present-at-hand. As many of the authors in this volume show, Heidegger’s later writings on art invite us to think about all things as manifold and not simply twofold, and how they open up worlds and histories.


15 Martin Heidegger, The Essence of Truth, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum Press, 2002), 8–9. The logic of the privative and the use of privative prefixes is widespread in Heidegger’s work, for example in the words ‘de-concealment’ (Ent-borgenheit) in relationship to ‘concealment’, or ‘de-distancing’ (Ent-fernung) in relationship to distancing, or the play and resonance of Heideggerian terms such as ‘open resoluteness’ (Entschlossenheit), which can be translated literally as ‘keeping unclosed’, or the term ‘disclosedness’ (Erschlossenheit).

16 One only has to read a fair stretch of Heidegger’s writings to sense that shape of this hermeneutical movement is not predominately circular. This becomes more explicit in his writings after the ‘kehre’. For example, the table of contents for Mindfulness, was described by him as a ‘Listing of Leaps’ – and more precisely, as a ‘series of short and long leaps of inquiring’ – and the sections of Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning) are called ‘joinings’. See ‘Translator’s Foreword’, Mindfulness, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London: Continuum Books, 2006), xiv.


25 Martin Heidegger, Basic Concepts, 13.


28 Martin Heidegger, Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 28–37. Much of the groundwork for Heidegger’s elaboration on ‘historiological consciousness’ was laid in a slightly earlier lecture course from 1921–22, Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001). In both texts, it is Oswald Spengler who represents the most ‘advanced’ formulation of such a consciousness.

29 Heidegger, Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity, 30.


32 Heidegger’s critique of Spengler intensifies in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, see Heidegger, Parmenides, 113: ‘For he has already in advance devalued history to a “biological process” and made out of history a greenhouse of “cultures” that grow and fade away like plants. Spengler thinks history, if at all, in a history-less way.’

33 Heidegger, Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity, 45.

34 Ibid., 45.


36 Martin Heidegger, Parmenides, 115.

37 Martin Heidegger, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’. A similar dismissal is found in The Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and Theaetetus, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 150–51: ‘Works of art, irrespective of their inner association with cult and ritual, no longer have their own Being and effectiveness, but exist for the interest of American tourists, visitors to museums, and historians of art [who explain how art can be ‘appreciated’].’


For two excellent essays that provide a good general discussion of ‘determination’ (Bestimmung) in German philosophy in general, and how Heidegger shifts determination away from the willing subject and ‘grounding’, see Rodolphe Gasché, ‘Floundering in Determination’, in Reading Heidegger: Commemorations, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 7–19; and Martin Seel, ‘Letting oneself be determined: a revised concept of self-determination’, in Philosophical Romanticism, ed. Nikolas Kompridis (London: Routledge, 2000), 81–96. The issue of mood in Heidegger is crucial and it appears in many of his writings where issues of anxiety, boredom, joy, melancholy, wonder, and indifference are all addressed. Michel Haar has made pioneering contributions to the subject of mood in Heidegger’s writings.


Heidegger, Basic Concepts of Philosophy, 9–10. In these pages Heidegger notes, for example, that culture is a basic concept of historiology, and that the concept of style is a basic concept of research in art history, and also in philology. It is clear, however, that issues of ‘culture’ and ‘style’ are merely subspecies of both modern ‘historical consciousness’ and ‘life philosophy’.


Stephen Melville has also critiqued Panofsky’s apparent emphasis on distancing and its effects on the discipline in his ‘Attachments of Art History’, in In-Visible Culture (rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/melville/melville.html), and more recently in ‘What’s the Matter with Methodology’, co-written with Margaret Iversen, and in Melville’s chapter ‘Historical Distance (Bridging and Spanning)’, in Margaret Iversen and Stephen Melville, Writing Art History: Disciplinary Departures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1–37.


Joseph Leo Koerner, Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). The entire book attests to an art historical unfolding sensitive to Heidegger’s work.

Peter Sloterdijk, Sphären, vols 1–3 (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998–2004). These volumes are currently being translated into English, with the first volume already published.


Martin Heidegger, Sojourns: The Journey to Greece, 18, and 69, n. 14.

See Alfred Denker, ed., Martin Heidegger / Kurt Bauch, Briefwechsel, 1932–1975 (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2010), 25 and 174. Even with our knowledge of Heidegger’s membership of the Nazi Party and his rectory address, it is still shocking to see the early letters between Bauch and Heidegger end with the ‘greeting’, ‘Heil Hilter!’ David Farrell Krell, also mentions the seminar in his commentary on Heidegger’s Nietzsche course, Will to Power as Art, 258.


Heidegger’s interest in Dürer gives us another dimension to the importance of that artists’ work for not only the discipline of art history – here one thinks of the his crucial place in the writings of Heinrich Wollflin, Erwin Panofsky, and Aby Warburg – but also for Walter Benjamin. For an essay on Panofsky and Heidegger’s engagement with Dürer, see Robert Bernasconi, ‘Ne sutor ultra crepidam: Erasmus and Dürer at the Hands of Panofsky and Heidegger’, Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), 117–34.

See See the brief mention of van Gogh in regards to his ‘intense confrontation with his own Dasein’ in Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity, 26–7. Heidegger states the fundamental connection between art and Being very clearly in the ‘Epilogue’, to the ‘Origin of the Work of Art’: ‘The History of the nature of Western art corresponds to the change of the nature of truth.’


Heidegger, The Will to Power as Art, 78.


69 For example, Heidegger, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’: ‘The Temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.’ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Philosophy—Thinking and Poetizing*, 18: ‘The Greeks had no “religion” because they were and still are the ones looked at [Augeblickten] by the gods.’ Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 108: ‘In the ambit of this primordial look, man is only the looked upon.’

70 Heidegger, *The Will to Power as Art*, 123. It would be more accurate to say that it is Hans-Georg Gadamer, not Heidegger, who overemphasizes the subjective dimensions of Kantian aesthetics, instead of seeing it as suspended between the subjective and objective.