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An interpretation on the ideas of Cesare Brandi in the *Theory of restoration*

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Translation by Valerie Magar

Abstract

Some of the fundamental concepts of the Brandi's theory are analyzed with the aim of producing an interpretation which will detail its content and philosophical guides. The concept of Restoration, of work of art, of cases, of material and image, and of oneness are discussed, using different sources from philosophy, aesthetics, pragmatism, hermeneutics and phenomenology.

Keywords: *Cesare Brandi, theory of Restoration, philosophical guides, interpretation.*

Introduction

This document is part of a reflection on the uses of the theory of Restoration employed by the National School of Conservation in Mexico (Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía "Manuel del Castillo Negrete", ENCRyM), which I am formulating as a final project in a Master in Critical Theory.¹ Given that Cesare Brandi's *Theory of restoration* has been a constant reference in Mexico, I decided to reread and interpret it, with the aim of detailing some of its sources and going deeper into the understanding of his ideas.

The analysis is viable because there are explicit references by the author in several sections of the text itself, because his impact at an international level has been extensively studied, and because we are familiar with some of the philosophical sources that he employed to develop his theoretical concepts. Although part of his written production has already been translated into several languages, his philosophical references have seldom been made explicit. I consider it pertinent to make this interpretative reflection, because it is a text that is still valid in the Mexican context, although addenda have been made with other perspectives in mind, and because this can give rise to international multidisciplinary studies aimed at developing an in-depth panorama of Brandi's thought. Due to the text's limited extension, the concepts that I have used are limited to the definition of Restoration, work of art and monument, material and image, oneness, which includes potential whole and the visual oneness and finally the cases.² The other relevant aspect is to focus readers' attention on the analysis of other versions that are different from the Spanish translation published by

¹ Master program in Critical theory at the Instituto de Estudios Críticos (Mexico).

² The terms used here are those employed in the translation by Cynthia Rockwell, in Cesare Brandi's *Theory of restoration* (2005). Note from the translator.

Alianza Editorial (Brandi, 1995), which is the one that has most widely-read in Mexico. It is my belief that aforementioned translation employed an over elaborate grammatical structure that is irregular and unclear. It may be that the very expressive language of Cesare Brandi in his original text has resulted in incomprehension, a degree of superficiality in its use and a broad rejection in Mexico since the end of the 1990s.

As a text, in any of its versions, its critical fortune has been present in the language of conservators, who have sometimes been closer to the interpretive studies made by Paul Philippot. But its seminal vein is undeniable, as Stanley Price pointed out in the introduction to the English version (Brandi, 2005), derived from his critical approach to Restoration, his aesthetic phenomenological perspective that ponders the subject in relation to the object, by his vision of its content, which he calls substance; and for his call for a code of professional practice, at the beginning of the growth of the discipline as such, at the international level.

The tradition in Cesare Brandi's thought is complex to wield. I have analyzed the influence of Benedetto Croce's book *Aesthetics as science of expression and general linguistic*. If we assume that Brandi was influenced by Croce, and if we follow the thought proposed by the latter in that book, we could assume that Brandi read authors such as Goethe, Winckelmann, Kant, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Schleiermacher and Nietzsche, to mention a few. Giuseppe Basile provided a biographical note in which he stated that Brandi found inspiration in the reflections of Plato, Kant, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Arnheim, Jacobson and Barthes (Roig y González, 2008: 234), not to mention Henri Bergson who was also a central figure regarding his conception of time. For my reflections in this text, I selected three of his sources: Croce, Husserl and Dewey.



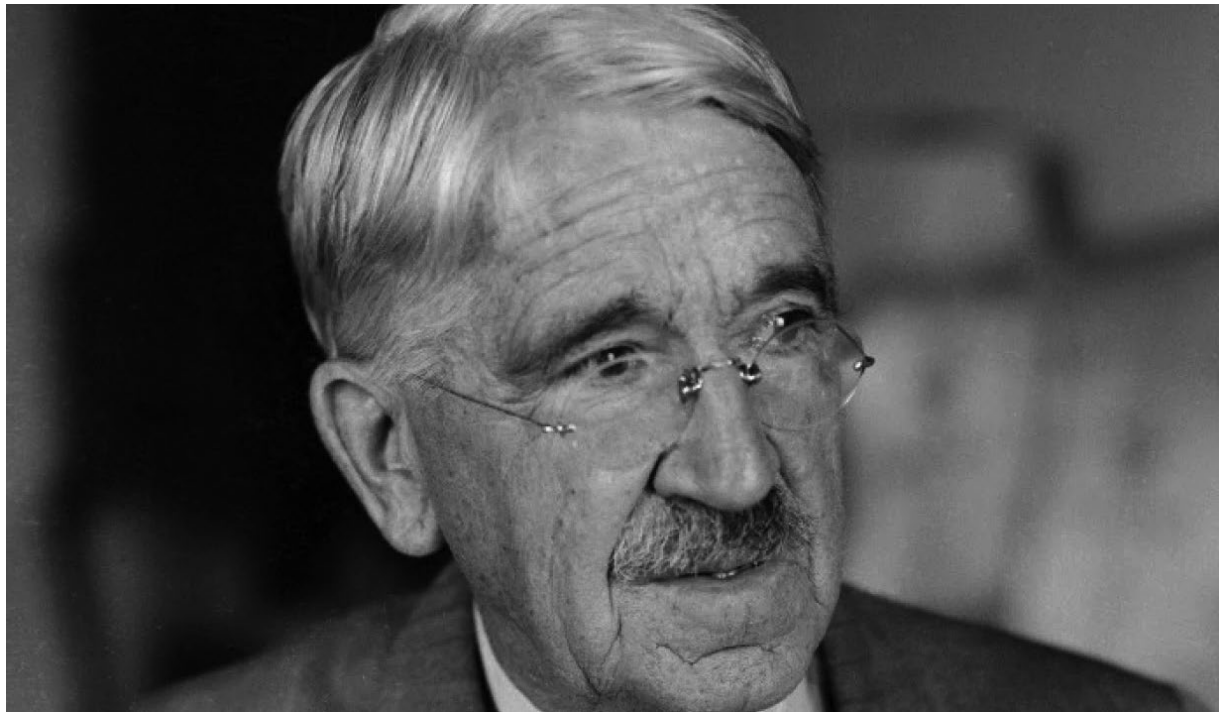
BENEDETTO CROCE. Image: Public domain.

In Mexican Conservation, the figure of Cesare Brandi, as well as that of Benedetto Croce, have been undervalued; their proposals have been deemed historicist and archaic, connotations that are also used to describe both authors. Curiously, the criticism emphasizes what Croce, and then Brandi, did not really consider in their philosophical development, but there are almost never allusions to their contributions. There is an exception in the case of Croce, whom the British philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood (2004: 269) considered to be a crucial character in the definition of Italian history, with a solid philosophical intelligence, which led to his historical position with the use of descriptive science, as *contradictio in adjecto*, since he equated history with art. These qualities could be attributed to Brandi's work. This has great implications because, according to Croce's definition, history was not a science, at least not as it was defined at that time by the German School, thus disqualifying naturalism, which had been in vogue since the 19th century. Departing from the Crocean thought, the definition of history is recognized as a type of knowledge that is different from that of nature because history does not seek laws or concepts, because it does not use induction or deduction, nor does it require demonstrations (Collingwood, 2004: 272). History narrates, and with Croce and other philosophers over time, it transits to an independence that allows it disassociated itself from philosophy and science. With Brandi, Conservation and Restoration leaned toward independence in its undertakings, moving away from the visual arts and from science and resuming the proposal of a communion between the humanistic and natural disciplines for the investigation and intervention treatment of cultural objects and works of art.

Brandi, although a student of Croce, defined himself to be far from the aesthetic positions of English empiricism and of Italian idealism; he was closer to the Husserlian phenomenology, to Dewey's pragmatism and to a hermeneutical trend, under which Restoration operates. Brandi himself mentioned that he was introduced to Husserl a result of his initial contact with Jean-Paul Sartre in 1939, from whom he took the idea of intentionality, which made it possible to trace the Hegelian presuppositions to the ideas of Kant, Husserl and Heidegger. This was a position that was easy to maintain in Italy at that time because, as Brandi mentioned, nobody or very few spoke about phenomenology and existentialism (Brandi in Catalano, 1998: 15). It seems to me that in general terms, it could be pointed out that phenomenology is an intellectual attitude of a critical philosophical order, which takes the experience lived intentionally as the starting point of the process resulting in the acquisition of knowledge. This experience produces a moment of consciousness that unveils a link between the well-disposed subject and the object with which the phenomenal experience is realized. The object is a reality perceived by the subject, who puts in brackets the real world and his belief in the possibility of disassociating himself from the object. The subject makes a suspension of criticism (*epoché*), to locate the essence of the object that he perceives.

Regarding John Dewey, as a pragmatist he argued that what is recognized or called reality, even as a world, is our object of knowledge and, therefore, is closely tied with the self. Man transmutes as a result of his relationship with different events and visions because what he observes, hears and feels, impacts and transforms each moment of his life, since it is both an individual and a collective experience. The latter translates his approach to reality through those things he is taught that allow him to grasp what his environment has to offer to produce artifacts, using his knowledge and experience. In that context, art is experience. I believe that the expression about Dewey made by Jordi Claramonte in the prologue to *Art as experience* is conclusive, because it points out that one of the characteristics of Dewey's thought is to recognize that aesthetics is based on the needs of the human being. It "is delimited by its vital functionality, it is connected with the fundamental rhythms of the relationship between

the living entity in its constant and defining interaction with its environment”³ (Claramonte in Dewey, 2008: XIV). This constant relationship supports the universality of the aesthetic experience to which Dewey alludes, and which, it seems to me, permeates Cesare Brandi greatly.



JOHN DEWEY. *Image: Public domain.*

It would also be helpful to remember that the critical analysis was a proposal credited to Camillo Boito, who associated it, in part, with historical studies with the purpose bringing knowledge in the present and in the future (Boito, 2017: 33). Its relationship with respect to hermeneutics can be attributed to the influence of Heidegger and Schleiermacher. For the moment, however, I will not go into the details of those influences. Without endeavoring to explain everything, since that would merit extensive research of itself, I hereby present an interpretive outline for the purpose of taking the first steps in clarifying the above-mentioned authors, as well as their concepts, and which I will try use in support of Brandi’s ideas for the benefit of those conservators who are interested in returning to the original text and delving into the understanding of Cesare Brandi’s concepts.

Definition of Restoration

Brandi said that no intervention, however minimal, can be relegated only to the field of practice, because it betrays the “theoretical assumptions that guide our actions, even if our consciousness contains them without us realizing it”⁴ (Brandi, 2008: 97). Hence, Restoration implies an intervention on an object, using direct and indirect actions, decided upon by means of theoretical precepts. His definition of Restoration says that it consists of:

³Original quotation: “se delimita a partir de su funcionalidad vital, está conectada con los ritmos fundamentales de relación entre el ente vivo en su interacción constante y definitoria con su entorno”.

⁴Original quotation: “presupuestos teóricos que guían nuestra acción, aunque nuestra consciencia los contenga sin darse cuenta”.

the methodological moment in which the work of art is recognized, in its physical being, and in its dual aesthetic and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future. (...) Restoration should aim to re-establish the potential oneness of the work of art, as long as this is possible without committing artistic or historical forgery, and without erasing every trace of the passage through time of the work of art (Brandi, 2005: 48-50).

It is possible to break down the definition into its various components. Restoration constitutes the methodological moment. There seems to be a clear allusion here to the thoughts of Benedetto Croce, who defined Aesthetics, from the point of view of an anti-positivist and anti-metaphysical philosophy, as the methodological moment of historiography. It is an idea that he elaborated in his chapter "Philosophy and methodology, in theory and history of historiography," which he described again in his *Aesthetic* (1985: 116). In the chapter on "Beginnings, periods and character of the history of Aesthetics", section III, after sketching the history of Aesthetics, he subdivided it into four periods. These periods, he argued, are the same as for modern philosophy, a new philosophy that can be defined as "the methodological moment of Historiography". Croce pointed out that what matters is "to enunciate the coincidence of Aesthetics with philosophy" (Croce, 1985: 116) and therefore with history. From this the possibility of considering that Aesthetics is philosophy is derived. Thus, for Brandi to speak of Restoration, is to think of philosophy. This assumes that in all three cases there is a need for a methodological moment linked to study and reflection, to the interpretation of the traces of the past that have come down to us through various types of testimonies.

It is worth remembering that Brandi pointed out that he attempted to arrive at the concept of Restoration by deduction from the concept of art; here again this leads me to assume the influence of Croce, not only because of the above-mentioned methodological moment, but also because Croce considered "the paleographer and the philologist, restorers of texts in their original state, and the restorer of paintings and sculptures [who strive] to conserve or return to the physical object all of its primal energy" through reintegrating the missing elements by working from the historical interpretation, "which revives the dead, [then] completes the fragments."⁵ In other words, through the interpretation of what is illegible, the original oneness of the work is sought, in order to make it legible again. Although this same expression, making the work legible, will be found in Philippot and in Brandi, it should be emphasized that, for both of them, the Restoration of a work of art transcends philology and historicism, suggesting a moment of consciousness and recognition of the phenomenon as an aesthetic experience, in which the moment of creation and fruition are defined hermeneutically. And, when referring to the primordial unity, for Brandi it will be the original one in the work of art, or the initial state for Philippot; it will become clear that this can only be an idea or horizon of the past, which must be approached conceptually, and never in its material aspect because it has been transformed in a natural manner as it ages. This supports a hermeneutic concept of historicist Restoration, transferred from aesthetics by Brandi.

But what does this methodological moment imply? Croce assumed that philosophy could not be contemplated without two fundamental elements, the historic aspect and historiography, which are both processes that represent the inseparable moment that occurs during philosophical reflection, and that imply the recognition of the past and a methodological process conditioned by the historic aspect (Croce, 1939: 253). The author continued by pointing out that, in the history of philosophy, which is the history of contemplation, there is a contrast

⁵ These definitions are found in *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale. Teoria e storia*, and in *La poesía*, referred in Catalano (1998: 13).

and an incessant struggle of critical knowledge (which he also called philosophy of the spirit). In it, there seems to be a unity between philosophy and history, where historical judgment is also a unity between what is recognized individually and what becomes universal, with a subject and a predicate, representation and concept. With this he tried to show that this is not where pure judgment is, but rather in the one that happens from history, in the moment in which the problem of knowledge originates (Croce, 1939: 267), which has a historical nature.⁶

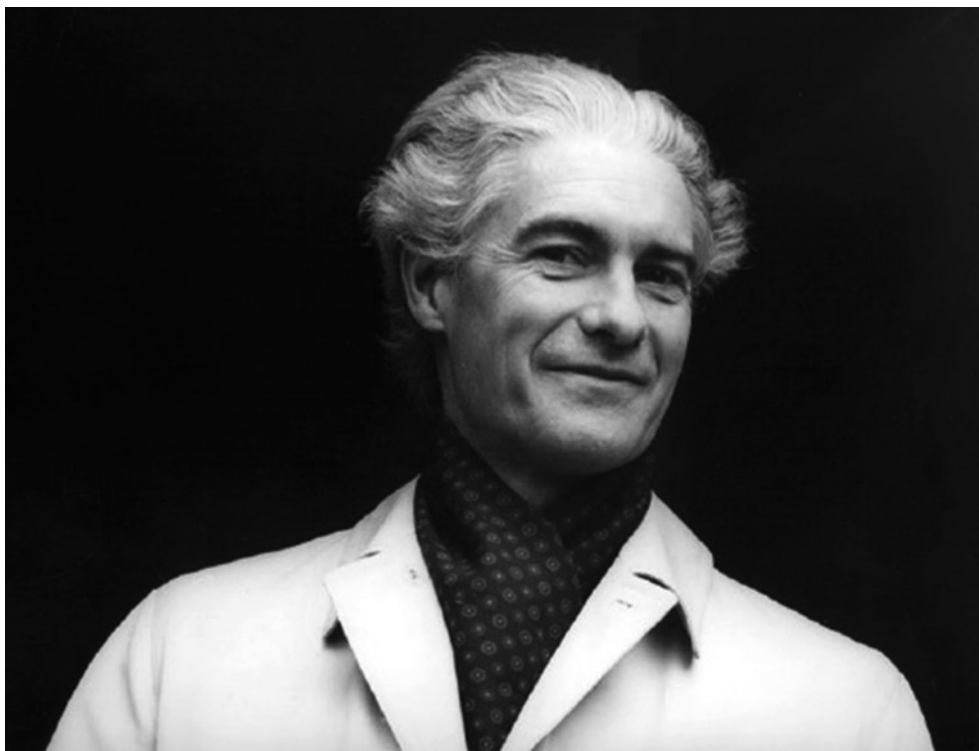
In Croce's methodology a dialectic, different from the Hegelian one of the reconfigured opposites, is proposed, in synthesis, because for him that dialectic is based on different states that require an action in constant movement; it is a bipolar aspect which imposes the need to carry out a critical judgment of the *dual aesthetic and historical nature*, which Brandi places in the case of the Restoration of the work of art. The methodological moment in Brandi is based on theoretical principles, rather than in the empirical-practical sphere (Brandi, 2005: 80) and it is situated in a Crocian dialectic process, supported by the reflection of the restorer upon standing face-to-face with the material of the work of art and the image, the historic and aesthetic, the creation and reception. It is a judgment based on the present to contemplate the past in order to produce knowledge about the work of art and a state of consciousness regarding its existence. It may be necessary to remember that during a trial, some elements are prioritized over others; the primary components acquire a unique relevance, depending on the space and time in which they are analyzed, the secondary factors tend to be forgotten. Then, the trial is built based on documentary evidence (understood in its broad sense for restorers, as traces that are indirect evidence of a past act), in explanations and interpretations.⁷

Therefore, the relationship of philosophy, as thought or reflection, can only be a methodology of historiography, with clarifications of the constitutive categories (aesthetics, logic, economics and ethics) of judgments derived from historical interpretation, which means that the methodology is not empirical (Croce, 1916: 308) as it is placed by Brandi, and it is a response against the trend that looks at phenomena from metaphysics. This allows a transition to the concrete aspect of the phenomenon, which is embodied, for example, in a work of art in the case of Crocean aesthetics and from there to Brandi's Restoration. In both cases, they are looking for the phenomenon not to be understood mechanically or from positivism, because in it there is a historical experience. The philosophical vein to which Brandi resorts, suggests the presence of subjects as receivers, who can have a dialogue with the historical experience in a hermeneutic way or who put themselves in a phenomenological disposition in front of it. It is about reflection that culminates in knowledge; that is the methodological moment. Such a moment occurs in a present that demands the resolution of certain needs or requirements, which are resolved by giving rise to the phenomenological event, to move into thought, knowledge, interpretation and action.

In that methodological moment, as Brandi called it, the recognition of an object takes place, from the artistic creation, which is the work of art as such. However, in my opinion, it is Philippot who explained that methodological moment in his text *Philosophy, criteria and guidelines* (1973). It is curious that, in spite of his wide theoretical production, Philippot does not seem to have a definition of Restoration, which makes me think that he used Brandi's concept, to define the methodology of the modern and critical Restoration, focused on the work of art as Brandi would have it, or on the heritage object as proposed by Philippot.

⁶ See Piñón Gaytán (2002).

⁷ See below the last part of this text, referring to the cases.



PAUL PHILIPPOT, CA. 1960. *Image: ©ICCROM.*

As for recognition, it is understood in Brandi as the process of an intuitive act, which occurs in the individual consciousness, where the work of art is unveiled. Already in his first essays, Croce defined art as an intuitive vision and representation of the individual; both concepts were used by Brandi. This recognition considers it to be a situation of individual order, linked to different moments: the creative one, where it arises as a result of an intuitive judgment, but also to the moment of reception or use, when it enters the living world. In other words, one could not speak of Restoration if it was done in a creative moment, or in any other stage of its life as an object, without there first having been the recognition of the work of art as such, in the consciousness of those who undertake the intervention treatment.

In this Brandian act, there will be a phenomenological point of view, of Husserlian character, which goes beyond the appearance of the work of art because it is an experience in the living world, an aesthetic experience where object and subject converge. In addition, there is Croce's influence that proposes art as a perennial formation of judgment, of concept and representation of that judgment; intuition is thought, passion, feeling that is contained in the form represented in the work of art, and this is its peculiar character (Croce, 1985: 119-121). In this way, he stands out by considering art only as a means to give and receive pleasure, as mentioned by Collingwood, or to be a representation of natural events, or construction and enjoyment of formal relationships (Collingwood, 2004: 269). It is also possible to recognize echoes of Dewey's ideas, when he mentioned that "the phase of reflection in the rhythm of aesthetic appreciation contains the seed of criticism, and the most elaborate and conscious critique is but its reasoned expansion" (Dewey, 1980: 146). For this reason, in my opinion, Brandi transits between the historical and the aesthetic in a dialectical tension, a philosophical and methodological exercise that entails reflexive critical knowledge. The moment of recognition, then, is unique in the critical, intuitive and individual process, both for the creator and for the spectator-receiver, and also for the restorer who seeks to legitimize a specific moment for his intervention treatment which, according to Brandi, is the current time.

By making a critical judgment, the creative act is questioned, taking up Croce's remarks again; even the analysis of the intentions and feelings that the author put in the creation of the work is put into play. These are recognized-interpreted from his work, from an aesthetic experience, which occurs in the present in the individual phenomenological consciousness (Catalano, 1998: 37). Therefore, this analysis and interpretation must be done in the present, from the standpoint of the viewer or receiver, or from that of the restorer. There, the constructed consciousness informs the restorer about the physical consistency of the work of art to be restored; a value judgment by which the technique of creation, the idea, its reception in the present and the transformations or decay suffered by the work become evident, a "philological and scientific process, which is the only way to clarify the authenticity with which the image was transmitted to us, as well as the state of its material(s)" (Brandi, 2005: 80) and its dual aesthetic and historical nature, which are submitted to judgment, in order to be transmitted to the future. It should be pointed out that for Brandi, authenticity is a sum of factors, elements and evidence found in the work of art, from its creative moment to the present, which is the foundation of the deep reflection on those traces and which sustains the critical decision, based on the interpretation of the restorer.

The judgments can also be universal or individual, according to Croce; in both, there are reasons for these being what they are, and both are inseparable in a real cognition, because the universal incarnates in the individual (Collingwood, 2004: 273). This brings to mind the idea that the tradition, the social, political, economic context in which the artist lives, offers theoretical and practical references, from which he chooses those that seem pertinent to him in order to build his idea and create the work; these allusions sometimes pass intact as part of a tradition that is maintained, and others are reconfigured according to the creativity, style or taste they satisfy, ranging from the universal to the individual. These are also judgments, manifested through the work of art (or cultural object) that the restorer must learn to read, interpret, appreciate and respect, from the collection of information and constant reflection, to approach to provisional certainties on its semantic value and its figurative nature.

Thus, Restoration is presented as bringing the work of art into the present, which has two recognizable aspects: the possible reconstitution of the authentic semantics of the message or substance, and the treatment that is exercised on the materials that constitute the work of art. These phases do not always occur in chronological order (Brandi, 2005: 77). This is clear to conservators who have experienced such a situation; although there is a primary phase of recognition of the material and the substance of the object to be restored, it is evident that the constant proximity, the communion that occurs after the passage of days, together with the processes of research and discussion with specialists in different areas of knowledge, gives rise to other nuances of the observations that are undertaken, offering answers to the questions, illuminating consciousness, clarifying the meaning of the image and the materials present in the cultural object, without the need to separate the phases and their constructions nor to analyze them in any specific order.

Work of art and monument

Brandi states that the work of art is a unique object derived from the unrepeatable singularity of its historical events (sum of the creative moment, the stages of transition in time and the moment of present reception); hence, each case in which restoration treatments are required will have to be considered as a particular case. One can find here new echoes of Dewey's statements. He said that the material belongs to the common world, and although it does not belong to the self, it is used to express and that "the *manner* of saying it is individual, and, if the product is to be a work of art, induplicable" (1980: 108), given that the work of art is not made by a machine. Therefore, although there are many works with the same theme,

their substances will be different, because creative changes are inevitable due to the fact that everyone experiences things from their own perspective, culture and personality (Dewey, 2008: 124). This can be contemplated through a Benjaminian aura, provided by the presence of geniality; or by looking upon that work of art as a product of human activity that has a sensitive manifestation of the idea, which is experienced by a receiver. A work of art is an external representation only if it is able to internalize itself as a work of art, which subsists in the material: canvas, wooden panel, marble and color, but it will never be an absolute manifestation (Brandi, *Carmine*, 1991: 71 in Catalano, 1998: 38); this refers to the need to experience it phenomenologically and even interpret it hermeneutically.

Starting with the reception, it is understood by Brandi as a special product of the activity of man, distinguishing it then from other cultural objects. It is a work of art because there is in it an individual, recognition, which is specific and conscious, which, as Brandi mentions, is unusual because it must be carried out continuously (Brandi, 2005: 47), in a sort of individual recreation, similar to what Croce proposed, from the experience and the judgments produced to validate it. Here, the experience according to Dewey:

it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. Instead of signifying surrender to caprice and disorder, it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation, but is rhythmic and developing. Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ (...) it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is the aesthetic experience (1980: 19).

Brandi treats the work of art by applying phenomenology, where the work is subjected to an epochè (Brandi, 2005: 90). It is about subjecting things to a suspension of conviction that serves to highlight consciousness. Obviously, there is an echo of Husserl's ideas in this work, departing from the fact that phenomenology is a science where disciplines converge, with a method and an intellectual attitude of a philosophical nature (Husserl, 2015: 31). The real world perceived by the subject transits to a moment of detachment, of separation from reality, from the material of the object and even from his previous knowledge, to live the experience. The *epochè* is a suspension of the belief that there is a reality independent of the subject, given that he cannot stop capturing or feeling the world, but he can suspend the questioning about the reality of what he captures, so that it is a methodological doubt. The suspension also offers the possibility of thinking that reality is not independent of the subject who receives it, because it is the subject who is willing to be impacted by it, because he will always receive the object from what that subject is thinking or elaborating as conjecture; it is not a relation given from what the object puts into play. It continues with the eidetic reduction whose objective is to discover what it is that really makes the thing be what it is, in other words, it is about looking for the essence (eidos) of the work of art or the monument, which is not in the material of the work of art. Therefore, from that suspension of thought, it is possible to recognize the universally valid essence that manifests the work of art and that allows it to become visible in the conscience. This implies a way of questioning, of waiting for an epiphany or intuition, a unique appearance for each person; therefore, its reception and recognition will have different forms.

The idea of the work of art as an object of experience in the living world, a thing that is presented in front of our consciousness, occurs at the moment it enters our perception and experience. Its essence is accepted and is not questioned, instead of thinking about an object of art that declines towards a generic objectivity (Brandi, 2005: 90); therefore, it cannot be the sum of materials and technologies, which do not consider perception and experience. However, pragmatically, everything: its essence, its material composition, its condition and its presentation, which may correspond to that which can be presented in a museum, as a work of art, must be analyzed.

In some texts, Brandi resorts to the concept of *astanza*, which according to Anzellotti, is a neologism created by Brandi to describe an aesthetic basis of the perception of a work of art; to describe an aspect of the work, which is the epiphanic presence that surprises existence, as presence or absence, as an appearance without essence, which therefore remains outside of time and space:

In other words, astanza is an intrinsic quality of art that transcends existence and time, which is shaped by an immutable eternity. The temporality of the astanza is condensed in hic et nunc, an eternity that is the reality of consciousness-work participation. Astanza is that moment in which an artistic expression –or should I say the pure reality of art– appears in consciousness, condensed in an image (...) the conformation of a form of something indefinable, the constitution of the presence of an absence, a sample of the dark side of the world, a figurative constitution of something infigurable. It is evident, therefore, how the astanza is linked to certain forms of perception of the given –a discussion that occupies the whole second part of the Teoria generale della critica– and the relationship between the elements that make up its ‘object.’ Among the diverse arts analyzed by Brandi in relation to the four forms of quotations [or examples] that he identifies (linguistics, linguistic sign linked to the optical citation, optical, audio) (...) together with theater, mime and cinema, they enter the astanza through the linguistic sign related to the optical citations⁸ (Anzellotti, 2016: 56-57).

For all these reasons, Brandi assumes that in the restored work of art there are two times, the time of creation and the time of reception, contested by the intermediate moments that speak of their histories and their contexts, of their natural transformations and derived from their interaction with the human being who uses, enjoys, assigns a new function to, changes and cares for the work of art, until it reaches our present, the moment of Restoration.

On the other hand, the concept of a monument that appears in his text “L’inserzione del nuovo nel vecchio” (Brandi, 2019: 51-56) refers in very Rieglian terms to any figurative expression, including architecture, painting, sculpture, even what is interpreted as a site, conformed by the environment and the creative space. If we recall Riegl’s approach, in *The modern cult of monuments*, we will see that the monument is any object created by man, allowing him to remember certain feats or individual destinies, to which modern man assigns a value. These monuments are of a historical nature, a broad category that subsumes the other types of monuments (ancient, intentional and unintentional). The monument has a core of historical conception, whose meaning is in being the product of “all human activities and all human fate oh which we have evidence or knowledge may claim historical value” (Riegl, 1995: 70). We should also remember that every historical monument is also an artistic monument, because it is clear that there will always be in each object a style that can be identified, a form, a material that accounts for a creative moment, the result of a unique and irreplaceable stage

⁸ Original quotation: “En otras palabras, la astanza es una cualidad intrínseca del arte que trasciende la existencia y el tiempo, que se conforma de una eternidad inmutable. La temporalidad de la astanza se condensa en un *hic et nunc*, una eternidad que es la realidad de la participación conciencia-obra. La astanza es ese momento en que una expresión artística –o debería decir la realidad pura del arte– se presenta en la conciencia, condensada en una imagen (...) la conformación de una forma de un indefinible, la constitución de presencia de una ausencia, una muestra del lado oscuro del mundo, una constitución de figura de un infigurable. Es evidente, por tanto, cómo la astanza está ligada a ciertas formas de percepción de lo dado –discusión que ocupa toda la segunda parte de la *Teoría general de la crítica*– y a la relación entre los elementos que componen su ‘objeto’. Entre las diversas artes que analiza Brandi en relación con las cuatro formas de citas [o ejemplos] que identifica (lingüística, signo lingüístico ligado a la citación óptica, óptico, audio) (...) junto con el teatro, el mimo y el cine, entran en la astanza a través del signo lingüístico relacionado con las citas ópticas”.



ALOIS RIEGL.
Image: Public domain.

in visual arts; hence the border between historical and artistic monument is impossible to define from his perspective. It is therefore inevitable to think of Riegl's suggestions in Brandi's ideas, on the concepts of art with defined artistic qualities and a specific historical condition that form Brandi's dual nature remind of the poles: the historical and artistic in the monument in Riegl; although the latter transits in Brandi towards the aesthetic.

The work of art or the monument must be recognized, an act that should not be assumed to be a surrender to caprice in the act of active interpretation, which the self makes of the world, where the aesthetic experience occurs as a product of the struggles and realizations that occur between the self and the world of things; perhaps this concept was taken from Plato. If this were the case, it can be assumed that such a world contains the material, physical things that transmute with time, in front of the world of ideas. In this sense, without the processes of recreation and recognition, the work of art is only potentially so, as Dewey points out, because recognition only occurs in consciousness. However, it also implies a judgment to define that the object is art; in this, what counts is not only the material, but also the way in which the work of art as such is offered to the individual conscience (Brandi, 2005: 48) as experience. Philippot (1966: 3) mentioned that the experience of the work of art consists in the comparison between the current state and the lived representation of the original image, with the hermeneutical circle appearing not closed, mobile and vicious, in which one circulates and with which there is a constant dialogue to refine and expand horizons, and produce new knowledge. The hermeneutic transit allows recognizing the work of art as such; it can be exempted from the phenomenological world and move to the real world, in relation to the recognition that has taken place (Brandi, 2005: 90) to understand it, something that will imply perception, search for the essence, consciousness, recognition and interpretation.

It can be observed that Brandi's conception of the work of art implies a considerable amount of concepts that are barely recognizable as elements that must be considered in the use of his theory, basically because they are not analyzed in depth or their understanding is assumed based on common sense. In Mexico, since the 1970s, the notion of works of art has been transferred to cultural heritage, disdaining the idea of intervening in the latter, due to the strong impact of anthropology on the regulation and legislation on the nation's cultural heritage. This opened infinite possibilities for Conservation, although in some cases it has left the work of art in a defenseless state, by not being recognized as something unique, derived from the intention and creative action of a man in a specific chronotope, which can provoke an aesthetic experience in us. The work of art, as a thing of the past, is always present; following Benedetto Croce, it is material and image that are transformed with time; it is a work that potentially lives in the experience of the individual who recreates it, a concept based on the precepts by Dewey, unique and unrepeatable in Brandian terms. In it, "[t]he oppositions of individual and universal, of subjective and objective, of freedom and order, in which philosophers have reveled, have no place (...). Expression as a personal act and as an objective result are organically connected with each other" (Dewey, 1980: 82), where, Brandi affirms, material and image coexist.

Material and image

Matter can be defined as structure and appearance, as a medium that contains the message of the image; both material and image are two sides of the same coin. Appearance and structure represent the two functions of material in a work of art, and the distinction between them, for example, in an easel painting is very subtle, since both provide its image. The type of support that is selected will offer the person who produces the representation a different appearance that causes different aesthetic experiences; a fibred wood will produce textures that will not be present in a painting on a metal sheet. So it can be said that the structure, with respect to what Brandi pointed out, is basically what corresponds to the support; therefore, he will point out that anything that needs to be changed in this structure-material can be done, since in principle this will not affect the work of art. However, his argument is questionable based on the previous explanation.

The material-aspect is composed by the elements that are located on top of the support and that conform the image, which is what is represented through the material; this material-aspect should not be modified in a Restoration treatment. If, due to some decay, the material is compromised, the aspect must always prevail over the structure (Brandi, 2005: 51), because aspect is the one that gives meaning to a work of art, not its structure. This can never imply contempt for this material-structure, because it is a historical trace, a testimony with historic-artistic values, as Riegl conceived it, and a technological and historic testimony associated with the creative moment. According to Dewey, form and substance (material and image) are indivisible, given that "the work itself *is* matter formed into esthetic substance" (Dewey, 1980: 109). According to him, both the critic and the theorist draw distinctions between these only for the purpose of analyzing the artistic product; but it emphasized that the creative act is what it is because of how it was made, there is no distinction there "but perfect integration of manner and content, form and substance" (Dewey, 1980: 109). Derived from this approach, we could assume that Brandi used Dewey and he added that it is historical evidence, as Croce had proposed. For Croce, according to Collingwood, there is an identity between art and history, because art narrates or represents what is possible, while history narrates or represents what has really happened. Croce would later clarify that in an artistic representation, the real is dialectically distinguished from the possible through thought, so that it is much more than representation or artistic intuition, it is a philosophical concept and, therefore, it represents judgment and time, universal and individual, pure intuition (Croce alluded to by Collingwood, 2004: 271).

As we saw, Dewey recognized the presence of substance and form as constituent elements of the work of art; concepts that Brandi later used in the same manner. When describing the material, Brandi pointed out that it is the material form of the work of art that is restored: “only the material form of the work of art is restored” (Brandi, 2005: 51). As it is stated, it is not only a matter of directly intervening on the material of the work of art; it refers to the material form, in which the substance, the form and the image of the work of art are involved. For those who have only read Brandi's *Theory of restoration* superficially, Restoration is undertaken only on the material, as a dogma to be followed, without critical reflection. As an example, the following question arises: How can the material of a sculptural relief be intervened without considering its form? For this Brandi stated that a failed investigation of the material can lead to problems that cause errors and the destruction of the object. The example he used is marble from a quarry that is identical to the marble of a sculpture, where the material has become the vehicle for the image; in the first case it is a calcium carbonate, in the second it is the same material that has become history, thanks to the transformation produced by man, which is now an image. In the latter case, the material has two functions: to be structure and appearance, the first being subordinate to the second. Even if the type of material is known and it is extracted from the same place, there is no justification to make a copy of the object; here the author is emphatic in pointing out that this would be an action different from reconstruction and Restoration. The copy, even if it is of the same material, will be a product of its time, not of the past and therefore it will be different from that which is considered a monument; and it can only be considered as a historical and aesthetic falsification.

Dialectically, although the image is what occupies the viewer's imagination, as Brandi pointed out, a complete analysis of the work must address the appreciation and understanding of the materials used that are the means to obtain the end, which is the image. He mentioned Hegel, as an idealistic aesthete, a current that refused to take the material into consideration; and he mentioned that even Hegel could not avoid referring to the material as something external and given:

appearance itself is essential to the essence. Truth would not be truth if it did not show itself and appear, if it were not truth for someone and for itself, as well as for the spirit in general too. Consequently, not pure appearance in general, but only the special kind of appearance in which art gives reality to what is inherently true can be the subject of reproof. If in this connection the pure appearance in which art brings its conceptions into existence is to be described as 'deception,' this reproof first acquires its meaning in comparison with the phenomena of the external world and its immediate materiality, as well as in relation to (...) the inner world of sense (Hegel, 1988: 8).

However, what Brandi asserted is that the material form must be examined in greater depth, since it is a fact that any image is based on a physical means to manifest itself, which implies that it is not an end in itself. But this does not excuse us from considering how materials are used and how this relates to the image (Brandi, 2005: 51). It is worth remembering the clarifying proposal by Paul Philippot, who stated that the material is the one entrusted with the transmission of the image (Philippot, 1966: 1). For his part, Brandi pointed out in the *Carmine* that

The object is the matrix of the image... but, as soon as the image disappears... the constitution of the object is an act of synthesis by consciousness, with which consciousness constitutes itself as an image [so] consciousness and image (of the constituted object) are the same thing... what remains of the image is the cognitive substance of the image [idea or substance]... the image, formulating



GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL
Julius Ludwig Sebbers, 1828.
Image: Public domain.

*itself, will be revealed as a form, and there can be no form that is not image nor an image without form (...) the transfer of the object to the form has a name, and is called style... [as] procedure itself by which the artist of the object achieves the constitution of the symbol, to make it external, fixed, inalienable to the form*⁹ (Brandi quoted by Catalano, 1998: 36).

There is then a direct and inevitable relationship between the inner world and the sensible world, the idea or substance and the external world which is the material; they converge in the essence of the work of art, which is experience to the one who receives it. Hence, it is absolutely incongruous to think that only the material is restored. Because art always pushes the convergence between its content and the material, given that they are both related. Brandi suggested that it would be wrong to assume the material from an ontological position, because it is a phenomenon as experience.

Thus, the conception of the material should not be limited to the physical consistency of the work, because there are elements such as specific lighting conditions for each work, which allow the manifestation of the image. Hence, he condemns the removal of works from their places of origin because that physical place and environment are part of the material that allow it to better present its image. The physical nature, which alludes to the material, also represents the place where the image manifests itself, because it ensures its transmission to the future and ensures the reception of the image in the human consciousness (Brandi, 2005: 49). The material, then, is not only what can be touched, measured and quantified, its conceptualization involves a representation of time and space, in its three great moments: creation, passage of time and current. Phenomenologically speaking, the material transmits and allows the epiphany of the image, close to the judgment of beauty: "*quod visum placet*", as Brandi reminds that the scholars pointed out. Here there seem to be two traditions of thought, the Husserlian phenomenology, which defines that things or bodies are materially perceived, "in the nexus of material experience, the nature that is constituted in it is known in its unitary causal space-time structure"¹⁰ (Husserl, 2014: 12). And Scholasticism, echoed in St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*; there in "Objections", Article 4, he mentioned:

1. Gooness is praised as beauty. But beauty has the aspect of a formal cause. Therefore, goodness has the aspect of a formal cause. (...)
I answer (...) first, the form whereby it is a being; secondly, we consider in it its effective power, whereby it is perfect in being, for a thing is perfect when it can reproduce its like, as the Philosopher says (Meteor. iv); thirdly, there follows the formality of goodness which is the basic principle of its perfection.
Reply to the objection 1: Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically, for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being a kind of movement towards a thing). On the other hand, beauty relates to the cognitive

⁹ Original quotation: "El objeto es la matriz de la imagen... pero, tan pronto como la imagen desaparece... la constitución del objeto es un acto de síntesis de la consciencia, con el cual la consciencia se constituye a sí misma como imagen [por lo que] consciencia e imagen (del objeto constituido) vienen siendo lo mismo... lo que queda de la imagen es la sustancia cognitiva de la imagen [idea o sustancia]... la imagen, formulándose a sí misma, se revelará como forma, y no podrá haber forma que no sea imagen o imagen sin forma (...) el traslado del objeto a la forma tiene un nombre, y se llama estilo... [como] procedimiento mismo por el cual el artista del objeto llega a constituir el símbolo, para hacerlo externo, fijo, inalienable a la forma".

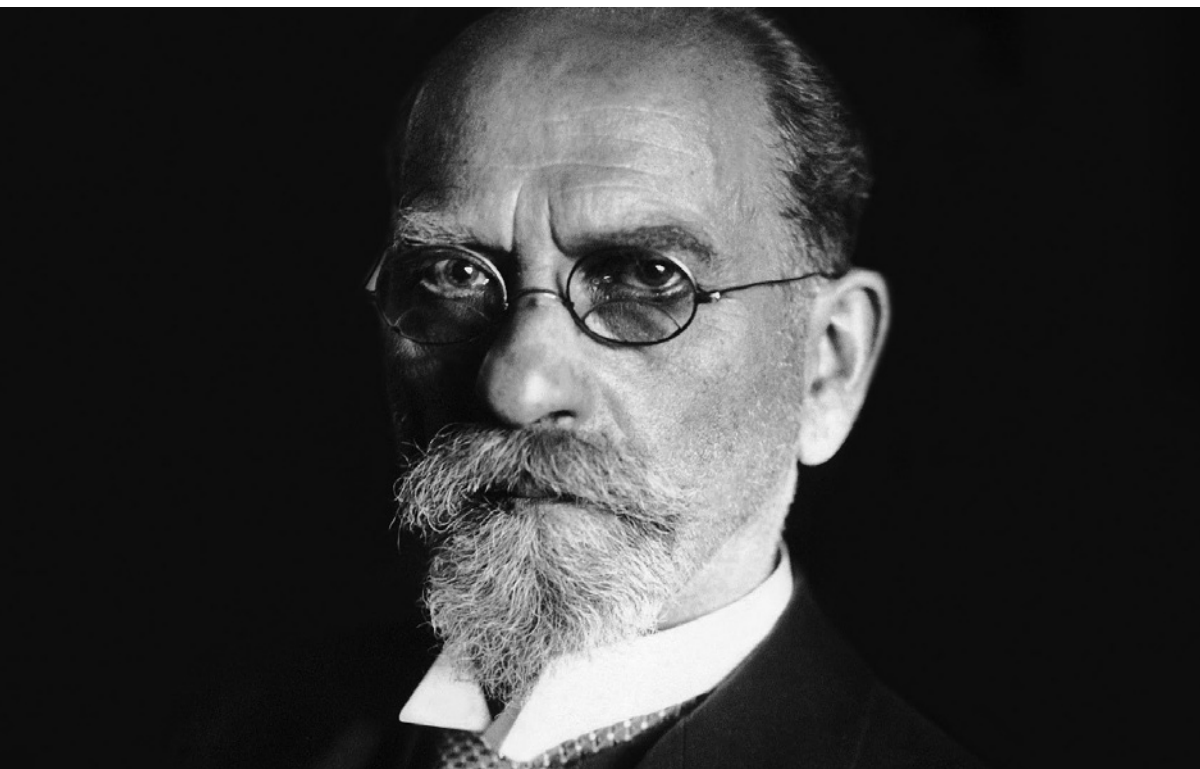
¹⁰ Original quotation: "en el nexo de la experiencia material, la naturaleza que en ella se constituye se conoce en su estructura espacio-temporal-causal unitaria".

faculty; for beautiful things are those which please the eye. Hence beauty consists in due proportion; for the senses delight in things duly proportioned, as in what is after their own kind---because even sense is a sort of reason, just as is every cognitive faculty. Now since knowledge is by assimilation, and similarity relates to form, beauty properly belongs to the nature of a formal cause.

Aquinas points out that beauty derives or is associated with goodness; that which is beautiful pleases the eye, and there exists a being who perceives the beautiful thing and delights in seeing it. Sense is a cognitive faculty, something that is given to the being as understanding, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out. Beauty depends on the form and proper proportion, something in which he seems to follow Aristotle. With the human creation, the work of God is exalted, but his level of creative greatness is never reached. In the text by Aquinas a triad of perfection is recognized between goodness, beauty and truth; it is in goodness where form and beauty are subsumed. But goodness and beauty have different references, goodness is associated with the appetite and beauty with the understanding starting from pleasing the sight, of delighting in proportions, measures, and similitude to the form. It is also linked to the form and the end. Then the beautiful thing to which Brandi refers to is associated with the understanding, with the form and with the sensible, with what produces pleasure.



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. Carlo Crivelli, 1476. The National Gallery.
Image: Public domain.



EDMUND HUSSERL. *Imagen: Public domain.*

Perhaps it is worth asking if this is only valid for the work of art. In this respect, Argan pointed out in 1947, that conservation is not only exercised on the material, but also on the value of a work, so the conservation action should focus on returning it to a condition of visibility, allowing the legibility and appreciation of all formal elements (Catalano, 1998: 19). This proposal seems to have been defined in conjunction with Cesare Brandi. I believe that all objects that are recognized as a product of human action, involve both a material part, transformed by man, and have a particular form that is an idea configured in image or appearance, without these objects necessarily having the quality of artistic works. Although the work of art is experience, it is an unrepeatable, singular entity, it is historical evidence, form-substance or idea that is experienced: material as structure and as appearance or image; where are other cultural expressions? For Philippot the image is that which is embodied in the material, not only of the work of art, it is in any object of human activity which, due to its significance, becomes a historical cultural reference. While, for Dewey, the form is delimited by its function, which is linked to its context and rhythms, similarly to how it was considered by Brandi (2005: 90) and Philippot (1973: 11); if there is a link to its context, it must be unraveled in two moments: the creative context offered by certain material at its disposal and the current context of use, which conceives various meanings in the object, not always linked to the material. Even Dewey (2008: 322) recognized that the problem of philosophical reflection does not concern the presence or absence of the objective material, but its nature and the way in which it operates in the development of an aesthetic experience, because the means of expression in art is neither objective nor subjective (Dewey, 2008: 324), it is the subject of a new experience in which subject and object cooperate in such a way that none exists by itself. Unfortunately, until recently, this had not been discussed in Mexico; while denying the presence of works of art, it remains present in our context defined since the 1970s as a territory of cultural heritage.

Oneness

It is understood that, for Brandi, the **oneness** of the work of art is closed and intuitive. It is not a functional organic oneness, like the one of a living body "from nature." If one looks at a cat in profile, one knows that on the other side there will be an eye like the one we are looking at; that is the functional organic oneness, which does not operate in the case of a work of art because the latter is considered an artistic recreation, which may not have considered placing both eyes on the depicted cat, or if one of the two were lost, we would not know for certain whether the both eyes had the same color. The work of art has parts, which are not autonomous in themselves, but have a value within a formal rhythm and meaning, which is recognized as a **visual oneness**. The value of each part is subsumed in the work itself. Plotinus pointed out that everything that has no shape or is amorphous is ugly, so it is exempt from divine reason; the form then is composed through reason, and it therefore has a certain divinity and is therefore beautiful. This form is a unit of parts, and only thus will it be beautiful; while the parts of this unit are beautiful, they do form a whole (Plotinus, 1992: 2-9). This is a conceptualization that Aristotle had already defined as "the whole is more than the sum of its parts." That is the closed oneness, a whole and not a total as a sum of parts.

Oneness implies seeing the object at a single glance, that is, not seeing it in parts, but perceiving everything simultaneously. According to Husserl, material nature is presented as something closed, and it retains its oneness not only in the context of theoretical experience, but also in the thought of the material natural sciences (Husserl, 2014: 139). This supports Brandi's idea. Paul Philippot offered more clues in this regard, as he pointed out that the original oneness is an idea imagined from the current oneness formed by the altered material, therefore objectively demonstrable, that makes possible the experience with the work of art. The object, on the basis of its formal coherence, denounces on its own the damages it has suffered (Philippot, 1966: 2). For example, when performing a cleaning from the critical point of view, a balance that is most faithful to the original oneness will be sought, which implies the aesthetic oneness of the original image, both defined from a critical interpretation of each case. We will never attempt to bring the material to its original state, because this is only a reference to define the level of change that will occur from the Restoration. Thus, the oneness for Paul Philippot, is the first moment of analysis in the recognition of the object, regardless of its dimensions; it is a whole that brings together the parts, which have artistic relevance as a whole and should not be dismembered. For that reason, he assumed that architecture and altarpieces are a sum of arts (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) that must be analyzed in their whole and complexity as a single entity (1973: 6), as a whole.

On the other hand, the **potential oneness** is one that is reestablished, and acquires an essential character under the perspective of the aesthetic case, during the Restoration treatment, especially in the processes of varnish reduction, when it is affecting the appreciation and legibility of the image, as well as in the intervention treatment of the lacunae present in the work of art, which interrupts the continuity of the composition. Therefore, the potential oneness is associated, in Brandi, with the remains of a relic that survive what was a work of art. If its condition is extremely poor, then it may not be possible to integrate the missing parts in a credible way, as stated by Brandi (2005: 64). In other words, it is linked to fragmented unity, where the oneness subsists "potentially as a whole in each of its fragments, and that potentiality will be demanded in direct proportion to the formal traces that survive in the fragment"¹¹ (Brandi, 2008: 111).

¹¹ Original quotation: "potencialmente como un todo en cada uno de sus fragmentos, y esa potencialidad será exigible en proporción directa a las trazas formales que sobreviven en el fragmento".

The restorer must be aware of these two terms and avoid using unity for potential oneness, which as we have seen are closely related terms, but with different connotations. The former is based on the recognition of the work of art as such. The latter refers to a moment of reflection and analysis prior to the intervention treatment that would include the reduction of a varnish or the reintegration of lacunae. And the third concept is visual oneness, prefigured as the delimitation of the level of intervention that the restorer hopes to achieve by means of cleaning/thinning a varnish to recover the perception of plans, shapes, details, colors, light, etc. or for the reintegration of lacunae. In this sense, Brandi uses concepts of the *Gestalt* psychology, for the recognition of the problems of missing parts in the paintings, which he defines as lacunae; the laws of *Gestalt* psychology allude to perception, therefore they permitted Brandi, for example, to define reintegration processes based on the use of vertical lines of different colors, which by proximity formed a color similar to the one used in the creation of the work of art, and at the same time allowed the temporal definition between both activities, a criterion that remains valid in our context. The law of contrast allowed him to define the presence of a lacuna, whose color, shape or location generated a contrast with the pictorial or sculptural representation, constituting an element that infringed on the figurative fabric of the work of art; these absences of material, or interruptions in the figurative fabric, constitute relevant figures that attract attention, sending the artistic composition to the back burner. That composition, that creative moment, has past and present experiences, capacities and tastes, with biases and tendencies, as Brandi pointed out using references from Dewey. Therefore the work of art or cultural object possesses a creative unity that reaches our present, transformed by time. In that process of change it can become fragmented, or lose some parts; there the oneness subsists potentially and can be reintegrated, if it has not reached a state of ruin, through a process of Restoration, which will seek to recompose its visual oneness.

Cases¹²

Cesare Brandi opens two chapters dedicated to Restoration with regard to the historical case and with regard to the aesthetic case, which I presume are analogic to the legal world; in other words as spaces of regulation where circumstances or arguments that define a position on a problem between parties are resolved. Brandi's ideas are organized around two judgments in the work of art, which point out that they are in dual positions: the historical and the aesthetic. Brandi calls them cases, *istanza*,¹³ from *in-stare* meaning to be on top of, a continuous perseverance to question, that urges to request or to sue; but it also refers to the series of actions practiced during a trial until the final judgment is executed, an exercise that must be supported in the knowledge of the subject matter. From this it can be derived that Brandi suggested that the restorer is located in the figure of a judge who defines, through the soliciting and constant questioning between the information that refers to the historical and the aesthetic, in the work of art that will be restored.

It is not an aspect of the work of art, neither of qualities, nor moments; it alludes to an attitude of the restorer when faced by these two cases, reasons and arguments that the work of art puts into play. In each case it is possible to refer to qualities and even moments. But what really matters, in this perspective, is the phenomenon that the restorer experiences

¹² In the English translation, there is a footnote on the term case, taken from the *Bollettino dell'Istituto Centrale del Restauro* (Brandi, 2005: 75).

¹³ "Nel linguaggio giuridico, la domanda giudiziaria che dà inizio a un processo civile e i successivi atti di parte con cui il giudizio stesso prosegue. Si dice istanza anche la domanda rivolta a un notaio, a un cancelliere, a un ufficiale giudiziario, per richiedere per esempio d'inserire a verbale determinate dichiarazioni. In un altro senso istanza è sinonimo di grado di giurisdizione (giudizio di prima o di seconda istanza); tale accezione è scomparsa nella terminologia dei codici, ma è rimasta nel linguaggio dei pratici e degli studiosi" (De Agostini Editore, 2018).

face-to-face, as an object of historical and aesthetic character, to determine a procedure from a critical judgment. The deep knowledge of the arguments of both cases, the archival documents that endorse them, the awareness of the implication that the object has as a work of art are questioned in front of the work of art, its history and its context.

All this will imply weighing the options: does the object analyzed to be restored have substantive arguments of historical character, as for example, a document that testifies to the censorship of an image, or aesthetic character, does the lack of visual oneness in a pictorial representation caused by a partial modification of the formal elements, and derived from the change in taste, style and time of refunctionalization, make the composition appear confusing to the viewer. The restorer as a judge will define if the element of censorship is maintained as a material documentary evidence associated with the written document, taking into account historical arguments, or if the aggregate is removed for the benefit of the visual oneness of the image, thus recovering the legibility of its initial artistic composition and giving greater weight to the aesthetic arguments. As it can be seen in both cases, there are important points presented that come under discussion; this is the problem that restorers face. Therefore, as Brandi pointed out, a deep knowledge of the object is indispensable, and to assume the responsibility for the interpretive, multidisciplinary and subjective process that alludes to our time and present context, a conscious knowledge that guides our interpretation and intervention treatment.

The historical case is the allusion to the phenomena of the production of man in a specific space and time, as well as its existence in a certain chronotope (Brandi, 2005: 48). This case should never be underestimated, as Riegl had already suggested, and its central figure is time, because the passage of the work of art through it leaves traces on the material, affecting it (Brandi, 2005: 61) in a positive or negative manner. For its part, Brandi mentioned that the work of art, as a product of human activity, presupposes a determination from the aesthetic case, which corresponds basically to artisticity (Brandi, 2005: 48), substance and form, material and image. In other words, What makes the work of art a work of art?, an age-old questions which again is echoed in Riegl's system of values. Thus, if under any condition, the work of art requires the sacrifice of some material part as structure, this must be done from the point of view of what the aesthetic requires, because it will always have priority due to its artistic uniqueness contained in the work of art. And once that artistic nature is lost in the work of art, the only thing that remains is a relic (Brandi, 2005: 49). Material as an aspect requires more profound considerations, since it deals with the image, the pictorial representation, which is at the same time sense, meaning, and content; for this, he used the concept of patina and he developed the concept of lacuna from the *Gestalt*, both with implications from history and from aesthetics.

Closing remarks

As I mentioned at the beginning, this text is a fragment of a broader reflection, which includes other fundamental concepts of Cesare Brandi's *Theory of restoration*. It is a first proposal aiming to go into greater detail regarding his ideas and philosophical sources that should be discussed with interdisciplinary groups in order to promote the enrichment and deepening of this reflection.

Regarding his philosophical sources, as was mentioned, the list of authors included in all his publications is very long. I have only advanced arguments on some of them in this text as direct links to Brandi's ideas. This in turn, opens up an immense possibility of lines of research, such as the one I proposed on phenomenological hermeneutics in Heidegger, or the little-explored one about Sartre and Bergson.

Based on a better understanding of the *Theory of restoration*, it is necessary to mention that the use of the translation into Spanish is not recommended, due to its semantic complexity. We suggest consulting the English version or the more recent translation published by the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia and of course the ones in this volume of *Conversaciones...* Additionally, any attempt to understand the ideas of Cesare Brandi without the bibliography produced by Paul Philippot is a serious mistake. However, there is still much work to be done to translate other works on aesthetics, poetry and conservation by Cesare Brandi into Spanish.

Regarding the concepts discussed here, it can be said that the conceptualization of Brandi's Restoration is a critical activity, which requires a historical and aesthetic judgment on the part of the restorer in order to evaluate the meaning of what has happened to the work of art to be treated. It is, as Brandi and Philippot pointed out, a field of knowledge based on the methods of the humanities and on technical knowledge of the exact sciences; an activity that requires observation, description, measurement, quantification, but also constant reflection, sensitivity, and experiences and interaction with the object to be treated, whether it is a work of art or not. These tools allow us to make the most appropriate decisions to restore, based on a hermeneutic-phenomenological interpretation of the monuments themselves, in connection with their oneness, context and history. This journey by the restorer is constant, movable and infinite, as he moves from his horizon to other locations located in different moments and spaces, which allow the comprehension of the creative act, of the events of the past and their current state in all their complexity, which, by the way, at least in the Mexican context is basically analysed from the transformed material aspect; only recently has its link with the social context been given more weight.

This temporary passage is where the additions, reductions and modifications that are associated with concepts such as patina, lacuna and ruin can be inserted and become part of our consciousness; there are elements where it is indispensable to understand the existence of a historical distance, which exists between those different moments and the moment of our interpretation, in which the Restoration takes place.

The critical judgment expressed in several texts by Brandi and Philippot was introduced to the Mexican context without any explanations, as if the meaning of what it means to critically judge a cultural object and our decisions derived from it were obvious, as if its conceptualization as a testimony of the past, as a social element, as an object that provokes an aesthetic experience was not complex enough. As it has been pointed out, this critical judgment, in the Brandian context, implies knowledge, philosophical and methodological reflection, starting from the establishment of a dialectic, in which its poles require arguments to be made, which allow finding the balance in and for the work of art, which are the foundation for decision-making. It is a practical and theoretical exercise, which, from my perspective, also applies to any cultural object, collection or site.

For its part, the concept of the work of art, discarded in the Mexican context because it is not considered to be very inclusive, has led some works of art to suffer intervention treatments that have irreversibly affected them, as a consequence of a lack of awareness of their value and significance implications; this was also due to the absence of a truly critical exercise that is usually enunciated but not implemented. Although this is not under discussion at this time, it seemed essential to put it under the reader's consideration.

In relation to material, it is essential to overthrow the failed idea that only the material of a work of art or cultural heritage is restored; there have been enough arguments to understand that it is inseparable from the image or the aspect, present in all those objects produced by man, monuments according to Riegl, traces in the style of Ginzburg (2003). Everything done

in the material necessarily affects its appearance, in the best case for its benefit; but not foreseeing it could be catastrophic for any historical, documentary, technological and aesthetic evidence. Because both material and image have temporary and contextual connotations that are inseparable in the understanding of the oneness of the work of art and of any cultural object. Finally, we should remind the need to specify the use of the concepts of oneness, potential oneness and visual oneness, all associated with a single phenomenon of perception and conceptualization of the object as a whole, but whose specific connotations are different, depending mainly on the approach to the object, in relation to its state of conservation and the goal of the processes of cleaning and reintegration.

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