

## 1. Introduction

*An account of places and things from inspection, not compiled from others' labours or travels in one's study*

William Stukeley, 1724

With the availability of secondary sources easily accessible through archives, there is a trend for some scholars to remediate the research of others, instead of undertaking primary research. It is understandable that archaeologists write about excavations they have not dug on, but basing archaeological narratives predominantly on secondary sources can perpetuate errors or misapprehensions and give new meaning to the phrase 'the archaeological imagination'. The challenge for the discipline then becomes historiographical - sifting through networks of references between publications overtime to an author that actually viewed an object or visited a site. This is where current approaches to art/archaeology differ. Many of those reaching across disciplines to explore this emergent collaborative field make a concerted effort to visit the undertakings of others. Artists take part in residency programmes on archaeological sites, and archaeologists regularly attend exhibition openings featuring the work of artists. At times, both meet in undisciplined spaces between their practices, to explore new possibilities for making and interpreting the world. The papers in this volume are written by people who are intimately involved in what they do and in encountering the work of others firsthand. They are authorities on the subjects of their own experiences – they have seen, touched and worked with the things and people they study.

Art and archaeology are not, however, recent bed-fellows. Since the seventeenth century, the past has been understood by the politics of display and visual documentation – for example, cabinets of curiosities, woodcut iconographies, paintings, archives, publications, private collections and museum exhibits. Indeed, many of the origins of archaeology lie in art historical traditions, sharing conventions and vocabularies for visualising the world. Archaeological practice has progressed with modern visual technologies and scientific revolutions, such as section drawings and single-context plans, creating standardised media. Such developments have, however, generated a perceived gap between the objectivity and subjectivity of images (Thomas 2009; Russell 2013a). Since the nineteenth century, many practitioners have sought to observe and objectively document the world, be it the changing colours of soils or similarities of form. Archaeologists are trained in technical practices as a means of rendering things objective and allowing comparative analyses (e.g. Westman 1994). After the acceptance of positivism in archaeology during the mid-twentieth century, image-making tools (e.g. photography; LiDAR; laser scanning), have increasingly been used to truthfully represent and document elements of the past (see Cochrane and Russell 2007; Bradley 2009; Jones 2012; Cochrane 2013; Russell 2013a & 2013b). Such visual movements are not only persuasive but essential to contemporary archaeology. They have, however, helped create a situation whereby representational interpretations of *all* things in the past dominate – to

end with a representational interpretation is understandable, to begin with one is problematic.

That representational approaches are used in archaeology is not a bad construct; for instance, it is integral for fieldwork. In more traditional archaeological narratives, some approach data with an expectation that all things represent things not present – invisible and intangible conceits. In such models, materials are passive and inert, patiently waiting for meanings to be overlain onto them by thoughtful people. The encoding and then decoding of things is deemed a universal human activity – being as popular in the past as it is in archaeology today (Cochrane 2012). That things represent anything is a *fait accompli*. In many accounts, people seem to step from intangible worlds, in order to represent their experiences as visual symbols. In such proposals the material world – separate from humans – influences little in the process of representation. Materials appear transparent here; they simply serve as the substrate upon which representations are overlaid (Cochrane and Jones 2012). What would archaeology and heritage look like if we did not *start* with such conceptions of things? What happens when we consider different elements in the world as influential partners within expression? Would we still draw the same conclusions, or would other narratives be possible? By actually doing things and being there, the varied approaches within this volume illustrate how processes of making and reception enrich such questions with responses. In effect, the papers here move archaeology beyond traditional modes of representation, often based upon secondary research undertaken by others.

### **So how are things?**

The world is a complex entanglement of things and materials – it involves mixtures of mixtures (Cochrane 2007). To understand the story of how things are, many turn toward archaeologists as the trusted and skilled mediators of material things, embedded within social relations. In recent years, archaeologists have, however, been turning to others outside their discipline to find new ways of dealing with things. This has developed into a range of diverse collaborations between contemporary artists, heritage professionals and archaeologists attempting to revise the way we move and interpret within the world.

This volume collects responses to a recent trend in contemporary art practice of deploying archaeology as an artistic method, process and aesthetic, exploring (and perhaps exploiting) modern beliefs that archaeology can reveal truth. These collaborative initiatives have significant implications for policy and the management of resources and sites. Firstly, they undercut long-established divisions between arts and heritage sectors and create new partnerships which transcend institutional boundaries. Secondly, allowing contemporary artists to interact with sensitive sites, buildings and artefacts poses challenges to established methods of conservation and interpretation.

To date, the majority of archaeological literature engaging with contemporary artistic practice falls into two main types: memoirs of personal discovery and inspiration, or strategic deployment of artistic work as examples of *en vogue* theoretical arguments. What the discipline has lacked is a critical context for evaluating the validity of these emerging forms of collaborative research. In this volume, we fill this lacuna by bringing

together the parallel agencies and practices of artists as *makers of new worlds* and archaeologists as *makers of past worlds*. It is our hope that the volume will help to establish a discourse about developing collaborations between contemporary art, heritage and archaeological practitioners.

As a point of departure, this volume acts both as a distillation of and step on from the proceedings from one of the central academic themes of the Sixth World Archaeological Congress's (WAC-6) – 'Archaeologies of Art'. We hope the volume will encourage the further creative interplay of various approaches to art within archaeological research and practice; to free the archaeological encounter with art from its special interest niche. It is our intention to bring together these scholars and practitioners to make a more collaborative and critical contribution to the vanguard of archaeological theory and artistic practice.

### **Structure and summary**

The volume is divided into four thematic sections. Each section brings together a group of scholar-practitioners who exemplify shared approaches to the art-archaeology endeavour. Between each of these sections, there are interfaces that present the work and research of scholars and artists. The intention is to disrupt the traditional flow of the academic volume, allowing space for creative practice.

The first section, 'Exploration and Experimentation', brings together the work of three archaeologists who have made substantial commitments in their research and professional lives for engaging with modern and contemporary art as a source of inspiration. We are fortunate to be able to begin with a conversation with the distinguished Colin Renfrew in which he reflects on his first encounters with art and how he came to work with some of the seminal artists of our time. As the most experienced in this volume, Colin's contribution offers critical perspective on not only the discipline's relationships to the arts but also the emerging interdisciplinary spaces between contemporary art, archaeology and the study of the contemporary past. Andy Jones's research carries on in the spirit of Renfrew's interpretive engagement with the arts; however, he demonstrates, in his treatment of Upper Palaeolithic art, that contemporary art can not only inspire but transform the interpretive potential of archaeological research. Andy calls for a liberation of the interpretive realm of archaeology to allow less deterministic interpretation of things. He suggests continuity between archaeological data and contemporary art and uses this as a basis for embracing the experimental and performative in archaeology, not only for archaeological agency but also within our understandings of the role and purpose of the past. Andy skillfully moves beyond mere representation by appreciating the processes of production, scale and reception. Lila Janick's contribution carries on with experimental interpretation of the past via contemporary art. Lila presents, however, the perspectives of neuroscience and neuroaesthetics as cause for a reframing of archaeological interpretation. Her contribution widens the sense of the experimental from an unfettered humanistic sentiment to include more rigorous scientific approaches. This is augmented by contextual and deep understandings of archaeological data.

The second section, 'Curation and Exhibition', focuses on practical and critical issues as well as the interpretive possibilities that arise in the production, presentation and display of contemporary arts within archaeological and heritage scenarios. It begins with a reflection upon and contextualization of the *Ábhar agus Meon* exhibition series from the Sixth World Archaeological Congress held at University College Dublin in 2008. Featuring a curatorial programme of contemporary art exhibitions and events by local and international artists, the exhibition series presented the parallel visions of artists and archaeologists and catalyzed collaborative conversations and projects at the World Archaeological Congress. Following this, longtime museum director and curator Pat Cooke presents a reflection on his decision to introduce a contemporary arts commissioning programme to his direction of Kilmainham Gaol - a nationally significant heritage site in Ireland. As is Pat's fashion, he envelops his memoir within a sophisticated treatment of the social, political and conceptual implications of introducing contemporary arts practice to the field of heritage management. Helen Wickstead follows in the spirit and intent of Cooke's contribution in her critical reflection on her recent work with a group of contemporary artists to realize new responses to Stonehenge. Focusing on tensions around one particular project - *in situ* video art - Helen builds on a dissonance that arose during the generation of the artwork to present a compelling argument regarding the challenging relationships between heritage, archaeology, film and mixed media. .

Section three, 'Application and Exchange', presents three case studies of projects which feature the application of archaeological practice to artistic materials, and the incorporation of artistic practice and display, into archaeological practice. The section begins with a paper by Blaze O'Connor who worked on the reconstruction of artist Francis Bacon's studio at the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. The studio was professionally excavated and disassembled in London, so that it could be relocated to Dublin, Ireland in 1998. Blaze and Ian Alden Russell organized a plenary session at the Sixth World Archaeological Congress involving archaeologists and curators who worked on the project, and this paper celebrates the unique insights Blaze brought to applying archaeology to the treatment and interpretation of arts materials and sites. Antonia Thomas follows with a compelling discussion of her endeavour to incorporate artists and artistic practice into excavation work in Orkney, Scotland. Antonia's project is particularly interesting for not only involving contemporary art into on site archaeological work but also transposing post-excavation work and interpretation to a gallery context. Bringing artists to an archaeological site and archaeologists to a gallery site as part of an ongoing process suggests possibilities for mutually enriching exchanges. Following this, artist and scholar Michaël Jasmin offers a critical history of artistic projects that have approached, engaged and appropriated the archaeological. Michaël's research presents a number of artists that are less well known within archaeological scholarship than they should be, and offers vocabulary and categories for evaluating their art-archaeological work. He concludes by presenting some of his own efforts to incorporate artistic practice within archaeological research as part of a multi-year project in Magura, Romania.

The final section, 'Archaeology after Art' turns towards some seminal figures in the emerging art-archaeology field who for the last few decades, have been steadily advancing the engagement of contemporary art within archaeological research. Long time collaborators, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, present a deeply reflexive and engaging reflection on the history of their creative endeavours. Taking the form of a conversation between the two scholar-practitioners, the paper both presents their individual perspectives, styles and personalities while also dissolving their collaboration into the divisible and partible, 'Pearson|Shanks'. The volume concludes with the work of Doug Bailey, who, in this paper, offers a provocative critical reading of the art-archaeology field. Rather than focusing exclusively on either the artistic or archaeological qualities of such work, Doug urges us to let loose and let go of any strictures to allow these emergent modes of practice to become what they may. Doug leaves us with the challenge to go beyond, and to consistently do so, from project to project.

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