

Programme

Reconstructions of the Past. How do we make them and do they matter?

26th A&T Symposium, 17 April 2019

09.15-10.15 *Registration, coffee*

Leiden University, Pieter de la Court Gebouw (Wassenaarseweg 52), zaal SB11

10.15-10.30 Opening

10.30-11.00 **Nomen est omen? Facial reconstructions to mediate between past and present**

Karla de Roest (University of Groningen)

11.00-11.30 **When reconstruction drawings mislead**

Ian Longhurst (Independent researcher)

11.30-12.00 **The Art of Perception in Archaeological Visualisations**

Kelvin Wilson (Independent researcher)

12.00-13.15 *Lunch*

13.15-13.45 **Limitations and possibilities in experimental archaeology and live interpretation**

Roeland Paardekooper (EXARC, University of Exeter)

13.45-14.15 **On some adventures of rebuilding the Lower German Limes. Interpretation Framework, Curatorship, Zwammerdam Ships and Contributing Archaeology**

Tom Hazenberg (1Arch/Hazenberg Archeologie; National Roman Maritime Museum; Leiden University, guest researcher)

14.15-14.45 **The Talking Dead: the tale of a Mycenaean young man**

Despoina Sampatakou (Nottingham University)

14.45-15.15 *Tea break*

15.15-15.45 **An artistic approach to deconstructing the past**

Celine Murphy (Heritage Management Organisation Athens)

15.45-16.15 **The lie that tells the truth**

Daan van Helden (University of Leicester)

16.15-16.45 **The Future of Heritage in Post-Conflict Syria**

Nour A. Munawar (University of Amsterdam)

16.45-17.00 Final Discussion

17.00 *Drinks reception*

Abstracts

Nomen est omen? Facial reconstructions to mediate between the past and the present

Karla de Roest

Facial reconstructions direct our view of the past and evoke emotional responses. It appears that people respond to these reconstructions as if they were living beings. Often reconstructions of long deceased people are named, and their 'voices' are used to give a voice to the past. They are given an identity that need not at all coincide with their original one. Moreover, it turns out that these reconstructions become part of modern people's sense of descent and identity.

In this paper, I start with exploring the roles reconstructions play, when engaging with the past and how this may obscure the 'real' past. Secondly, I raise the question whether we can ethically assign (new) identities to the deceased. Finally, I briefly consider whether these reconstructions should take the place of real, and often contested, human remains in museums.

When reconstruction drawings mislead

Ian Longhurst

Reconstruction drawings are a fiction subject to intense confirmation bias. They are part of the legacy of the art-historical origins of archaeology. They lack any trace of falsifiability and so lack any scientific justification. Science is based on what we know to be false. Fictions have a legitimate role in investigating what is plausible but drawings have no general role and are a distracting objective.

There is a common bias in archaeological interpretation to leap directly to the mental world for explanation – hence the overuse of the word "ritual". In any reality there is always a long chain of causation between artefact and mind. Archaeologists (and historians) are remarkably poor at writing down this chain of causation so the caprice or prestige of the Roman emperor too often becomes the "explanation". For example hypocausts are always assumed to be for human use and never for Roman productive biotechnology by controlling the growth of useful bacteria. A productive hypocaust has product coming in and product going out. Understanding is about connections more than objects, hence the value of maps and diagrams.

Examples of the misinterpretation of simple objects from Roman Britain including a well, a wharf, a pile-driver and a gate-stop in the middle of a road will be given. In the genuine complex and rational world of the past the well, wharf, pile-driver and gate-stop all lead on to questions of why they were located where they were. Answers should lead to questions.

The Art of Perception in Archaeological Visualisations

Kelvin Wilson

When things from the past world are reconstructed, those images are all too often also in the figurative sense bird's-eye views. Merely showing what places looked like, they hamper the viewers' grasp of what it felt like. They also use detailed knowledge as their premise, whereas a place is seldom fully understood even by the living people using it. Comparing visualisations of the archaeological past with experiencing our own world, and we'd find that material culture is not all what defines us, but is rather a tool in a range of experiences. Yet such a phenomenological approach is seldom utilised in archaeological visualisations— whereas even in, say, architecture, an awning is best understood when it rains, and an indoor room's design more appreciated when cold outside.

Experiences are narratives. As we work, eat and move in patterns defined by our surroundings we also know: we are just watching the hours in-between tick away. People also define themselves by private thoughts, believing their love for a select few overrides any social structure they from the outside might seem to belong to. A Roman matron perhaps lived to be mother first, Roman second. Like other art forms before, archaeological visualisations ought to be able to 'look inside' more often, and learn about structures and objects from the erstwhile users' perspective. This talk will therefore suggest new guidelines, new kinds of images, and from there, new old worlds.

Limitations and possibilities in experimental archaeology and live interpretation

Roeland Paardekooper

This paper focusses on three groups and their attitude to archaeological reconstructions.

The public encounters reconstructed objects in archaeological open-air museums, in showcase museums, at events and on TV; all these applications are part of storytelling, (loosely) based on archaeology. The public assumes that these artefacts are 'authentic' although they know they are being fooled.

With an archaeological experiment, one creates an analogy with the past. Data, collected during the experimental action are the main results. The hardware which may result from an experiment (a reconstructed ship, woven cloth or cast bronze item) is at best a byproduct of experimentation, not the main priority of an experiment.

Live Interpretation includes living history, museum theatre and storytelling. Here too, the physical reconstruction is not the main purpose of the activity but adds to the atmosphere. Both experimentation and live interpretation are actions in the present, inspired by the past. Where experimentation stems from science, live interpretation is more a bottom up approach. Although a lot of information has become easily accessible to lay people, even more is not.

In how far do people, archaeologists, re-enactors and the public, suspend disbelief when watching a Hollywood movie, sailing on a Viking ship or visiting a medieval market? Is it OK for archaeologists to cooperate with people who do not share the same academic priorities as archaeologists supposed to have? Are there other goals to archaeology besides advancing science?

On some adventures of rebuilding the Lower German Limes. Interpretation Framework, Curatorship, Zwammerdam Ships and Contributing Archaeology

Tom Hazenberg

Tom Hazenberg, archaeologist and entrepreneur, works in various projects along the future UNESCO World Heritage Site Lower German Limes. Some projects concern the development of specific limes-sites and some concern the entire Frontier line. During the 25th Archaeological Dialogues symposium, he presents the practice of developing the public outreach and societal engagement of the Lower German Limes. His talk focusses specifically on making the interpretation framework of the Dutch Limes an example for the overall development of the limes. Also, he will share his experiences on the famous Roman ships of Zwammerdam and how these old ships contribute to other modern societal - healthcare - goals, in the way UNESCO promotes.

The Talking Dead: the tale of a Mycenaean young man

Despoina Sampatakou

Storytelling is not a new archaeological educational tool. Narratives in historical and archaeological disciplines are the result of intellectual movements of the 1960s and 1970s that signify a shift from restrictive scientific approaches to more descriptive ones (Stone 1979, 13). Phenomenology offered a great theoretical context for the Archaeology of Emotions, while the emergence of Public Archaeology in the 1980s justified the use of storytelling for public engagement (Thomson and Harper 2000). Today, narratives could prove a useful pedagogical tool in terms of comprehension and interest among the wider public (Boutin 2016, 18). The aim of this paper is to produce a fictive narrative about an individual (MYC1, V) buried in Shaft Grave V inside Grave Circle A (GCA onwards) at Mycenae using recent osteological reports, archaeological data, Linear B, Homeric epics and depictions. I strongly think that stories are essential to better understand past societies specifically for the 'layman' - the person with no necessary specialized education to interpret the osteological and archaeological evidence (Prag 2012, 161) - who visits an archaeological site and especially when this archaeological site is a prehistoric one and no historical data are available to the wider public. Moreover, these stories could prove really helpful as a teaching material because it is rather difficult and sometimes tedious to speak about prehistoric societies without providing any visual or narrative context to the school children.

The theoretical and methodological background of this project is based on three relatively recent trends in Archaeology: Public Archaeology (e.g. Peter Ucko, Tim Schadla-Hall, Nick Merriman and Neal Ascherson, *Archaeology of Personhood* (e.g. (Fowler 2004; Boutin 2011, 2012, 2016, Bonacchi and Moshenska 2015; Moshenska 2017) and Bioarchaeology (e.g. Buikstra 2006; Sofaer 2006; Gowland and Knusel 2006; Knudson and Stojanowski 2008, 2009; Agarwal and Glencross 2010 cited in Boutin 2012).

An artistic approach to deconstructing the past

Celine Murphy

The artist's involvement in archaeological research traditionally consists in building upon remaining fragments to create 'more complete' images of the past. In other words, the artist helps compensate for a void left in the archaeological record by time and decay. Rarer, however, are occasions in which an artist is invited to deconstruct previous visualisations of the past.

I here discuss the role that art can play in publically disseminating new, topical or simply more accurate information about the past through visual 'deconstructions' of existing representations and interpretations of archaeological artefacts or sites. I propose that, in returning to the fragment, the artist celebrates its value, while publically demonstrating how creative a practice the science of archaeology can be.

I illustrate my argument with the example of the "Snake or Fake" fresco (Heraklion, Crete). Produced within the scope of a study on Arthur Evans' 'Minoan Mother Goddess' theory, the painting only represents parts of the iconic Minoan 'Snake Goddess' figurine that were actually found. The artefact on display in the Heraklion Archaeological Museum is in reality a reconstruction. In thus deconstructing the artefact, the work enables passers-by to appreciate the object's original form, and to consequently further understand how influential the aesthetics and social ideologies (in this case, regarding women) contemporary with an artefact's discovery can be in perceptions of the past. Lastly, in exploring the implications of the suffix "re-" in "reconstruction", I argue that the artist can act as a public mouthpiece for the creative nature of archaeological research.

The lie that tells the truth

Daan van Helden

The relationship between archaeology and fiction go way back to Bulwer-Lytton's (1834) *Last days of Pompeii* or Gustave Flaubert's (1862) *Salammbô*, but not just in the sense that archaeology has inspired writers to write novels about the archaeological past. From the very early days, archaeologists have been influenced by the novels they read about the very past they studied. The pushback against this influence is equally ancient, with fears of 'tainting' 'proper' archaeological writing with 'unacademic' influence or worries that the public at large

will not know the difference between the two, resulting in a loss of standing for academic study of the archaeological past.

In this paper, which draws on work I have done with Robert Witcher (Durham University), I will provide a brief sketch of the history of archaeology's engagement with fiction. This will inform an exploration of why archaeologists of the past and present have turned to fiction and what the benefits and risks of such a move are. I will argue that, in the words of Elphinstone and Wickham-Jones (2012), the differences between academic archaeology and historical fiction are "generic, not intrinsic" and that there are real advantages to opening up one's 'academic' mind to fiction's enrichment.

The Future of Heritage in Post-Conflict Syria

Nour A. Munawar – University of Amsterdam (UvA)

Abstract History teaches us that in order to end a war someone has to pay a price, usually through the loss of physical evidences of the past. This can be noted in the post-World War II European cities, i.e. Warsaw, Berlin, and Rotterdam. Viewed in this way, heritage casualties are not just an unfortunate side-effect of conflict but almost a pre-requisite. Few scholars anticipated that the war in Syria would eventually result in the near complete annihilation of cosmopolitan cities and the deliberate destruction of World Heritage Sites. And even fewer commentators predicted the rise of new non-state radical actors e.g. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS/Daesh) that would utilise their own interpretations and narratives of religion and cultural heritage to fuel the conflict in Syria. The destruction of cultural heritage during the hostilities in Syria has provoked scholars, institutes, and (inter)national (non)governmental organisations to debate the impacts of damaging irreplaceable heritage and the best ways to safeguard Syria's past for future generations. World Heritage Sites in Syria, such as the archaeological site of Palmyra and the old city of Aleppo, are threatened by reconstruction plans which have already begun to be implemented by government agencies during the war even as it is ongoing. The rapid clean-up and rebuilding plans of the damaged Syrian heritage could erase traces of war and violence which would ultimately result in ignoring that destruction of heritage can be considered as part of the life-cycle of any archaeological site. Heritage and memory have been exploited and often manipulated by political regimes in the Middle East, particularly in Syria.

This paper thus explores how cultural heritage and collective memories were utilized by Syria's Ba'ath since the second half of 20th century until our present time and how such acts would have an impact on post-war reconstruction of Syria's heritage. I take a different approach and argue that heritage is in a constant process of transformation and change over time. When seen in this way, the destruction and loss of heritage sites is not endangering Syria's heritage and may in fact be seen as creating a future heritage of post-war Syria. In my view, the recent intentionally destructive actions have started a process of heritagizing the present which will eventually become part of the Syrian collective memory. This process has the capacity to make a strong contribution to the re-building of a national identity in the aftermath of the war.