

<!DOCTYPE html>

Session ID	23
Session Title	Museum Archaeology: Thinking Through Collections
Start Time	Wed Dec 18 14:00:00
Room	731/6

There are several common misconceptions around museum archaeology. These include the assumption that it is simply a set of procedures for managing and exhibiting assemblages at the end of the archaeological process, and that it has had little impact on the development of, or relevance to, archaeological theory or museum going publics. This session seeks to challenge such characterisations and extend theorisation beyond gallery display to develop museum archaeology as a distinct area of reflexive individual and institutional research and practices integral to the broader discipline. In so doing, this session recognises museum archaeology as a political arena with an obligation to address recent discourses around class, gender, race, the public presentation of past peoples, and decolonisation. What is prioritised by and researched in museums, by whom, how and why? How do museum practices of assembly and reassembly of objects shape archaeological knowledge? How is archaeological praxis transformed or reinforced by the museum? What role does the museum visitor have?

Papers are invited that problematise and suggest new ways of thinking about historic, contemporary and future relationships between archaeological theory, museum collections, and the public, as well as the array of institutional and cultural paradigms through which archaeological enquiries are mediated and represented. Case studies and theoretical considerations that engage with the nature and status in the museum of archival field notes, photographic media, archaeological samples and replicas, alongside artefact assemblages, are encouraged. Similarly, papers that consider core museum practices (like documentation, cataloguing, storage, conservation and visitor engagement) as socially embedded and historically produced activities, rather than straightforward logistical issues, are welcome.

14:00	Session organisers	Introduction	
14:10	Lucia Nixon, Wolfson College, Oxford	Messages from Mykene: Othering and Smothering. Intersectional Orientalism and Sexism in a 2019 Museum Exhibition	Museum exhibitions show objects to visitors, but sometimes they display more than they realise, in terms of unexamined underlying assumptions. I was at first delighted by the Mykene exhibition (Karlsruhe), with a huge range of finds from all over the Mycenaean world. Then I became angered and concerned. The exhibition included photographs of earlier Mycenaean archaeologists, with several foreigners (German, British, American), and one Greek, but no women at all. Thus, the exhibition 'othered' Greeks and women in an example of intersectional orientalism and sexism, whereby Greeks can be archaeologists, but they're still sometimes seen as the unworthy 'oriental' inheritors of their classical past. Women can be archaeologists but whatever their nationalities, they and their work will be considered less significant. This 'othering' message overemphasises the work of foreign archaeologists in Greece, underemphasises that of Greek archaeologists, and renders the contribution of female archaeologists invisible. The 'smothering' message is, and, this is important, related: othered topics are often smothered in terms of scholarly discussion. The history of Greek archaeologists is less valorised and less investigated. Othering women, in this case archaeologists and their work, links to the occlusion of gender issues. The exhibition included a panel headed 'Women in Mycenaean Palaces' type (rather than, say, 'Gender in the Mycenaean World'). Such headings stifle debates on issues suggested by the very objects on show, while neatly maintaining men as the default category. The paper discusses examples of 'smothering' relating to the presentation of Mycenaean women and men, based on exhibition material.

14:35	Despoina Markaki, University of Crete	Cretensis mare ignorant. An ambiguous archaeological collection in Crete	In 2000, the Greek state accepted the donation of a noticeable archaeological collection of prehistoric antiquities from Crete. The Mitsotakis collection was already the object of highly controversial discussions between the two major political parties in Greece. Konstantinos Mitsotakis, the owner of this collection, was the president of 'Nea Dimokratia', the liberal-conservative political party, since 1984 and the Prime Minister of Greece from 1990 to 1993. The scandal related to the legitimacy of his antiquities' collection had been an essential tool used by opposition political party. During his premiership, Konstantinos Mitsotakis added almost 300 new antiquities in his collection while his daughter was Minister of Culture. Today, his son Kyriakos Mitsotakis, a co-owner of this collection, is the current Prime Minister of Greece. While most of the objects were recovered during illegal excavations that took place in Herakleio in the 1960s, the collection is exhibited in the archaeological Museum of Chania, the homeland of Mitsotakis' family. In this exhibition, Mitsotakis family is presented as a great benefactor of Greece. Greek society doesn't seem ready to accept such an accusation while at the same time the recently elected Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, is ready to request the loan of Parthenon Marbles for the bicentennial independence celebrations in 2021. I will to present and evaluate the one of a kind engagements of Mitsotakis' family, a great political family, with the Greek -and especially Cretan- past and the construction of their image through the exhibition of their collection in a public museum.
15:00	Hannah Pethen, University of Liverpool, Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology	Making it up as they went along: Reconstructing the methods used to generate an early 20th century field pottery corpus and their implications for modern research in historically excavated museum collections	The British Museum houses the archive and artefacts excavated in 1906-1907 by David George Hogarth from the north-western part of the Asyut necropolis in Middle Egypt. This largely unpublished excavation remains an important source for the society and burial customs of the Asyut region between the late First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom. As Hogarth only kept a representative sample of the pottery he excavated, his field pottery corpus provides crucial dating evidence for the artefacts and tomb groups he found, whether they are present in the British Museum or can be reconstructed from the surviving evidence. The archival documents reveal how the pottery corpus was created and expose its underlying assumptions. It is illuminated as a culturally embedded and socially constructed artefact, clearly influenced by Hogarth's British origins, his classical education and excavation experience. Exposing the practical and methodological limitations of the pottery corpus and revealing its colonial and Eurocentric foundations helps to avoid methodological pitfalls when using it in modern research and offers an opportunity to address the implicit colonial bias present in historically excavated material.
15:25	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
15:55	Monika Stobiecka, University of Warsaw	Imagineering archaeology: reworking digital media in museums	Misconceptions surrounding digital media in archaeological museums are numerous: they are believed to be new, inclusive means to engage a wide public (even though many openly criticize digital toys, and some cannot easily get into digital and virtual setting), they are seen as perfect means to aestheticize the gray and banal reality of archaeological objects (even if they mostly aestheticize the image of the past with fancy-designed gadgets), and they are supposed to support, explain or reconstruct real artifacts and sites (even if they have become exhibits themselves). These multiple fallacies may be the result of the techno-optimism or even techno-fetishism visible in museums all over the world. In my presentation, I would like to discuss, why fallacies took over the digital media in museums, and at the same time I offer a way to overcome this impasse. My hypothesis is based on the assumption, that there is no strong theoretical foundation for digital media on archaeological exhibitions, thus their application often ends with superficial meaning, blunt slogans, or simply a technological showcase. I believe that digital media and technologies have much to offer to museums and can be used to create meanings and inspire our imagination, only while grounded on a coherent vision. To illustrate this I will discuss the technique of imagineering in archaeological museums; a conceptual and theoretical framework inspired by technology studies, medical and bio-humanities and design studies. Imagineering will be a way to understand museum's digital media as a means to simulate visitors' imagination.
16:20	Morag M. Kersel, Department of Anthropology, DePaul University	Annexed Artifacts. Exhibitionary Bias in the public display of objects from the "Holy Land"	My use of the term "Holy Land" is a deliberate reflection of the geopolitical eliding of regional states, which in this paper I argue results in an annexing of artifacts and an avoidance of issues related to territorial ownership, the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, and ultimately results in exhibitionary bias. A museum's aversion to addressing complex issues of geopolitics, provenance, ownership, and archaeological site destruction caused by looting brings about distorted displays and inaccurate interpretations of the material record and injustice in the contact zone (sensu Pratt, Clifford, and Boast). Selecting particular things for public display and choosing to tell only certain aspects of the artifact's backstory produces prejudice in the contact zone. While in this moment of decolonization, the trope of the museum contact zone may appear dated, but it provides a useful lens with which to scrutinize elements of public display. The unexamined exhibition of archaeological artifacts from the "Holy Land" offers a significant set of examples in curatorial decision-making, untold stories, breaches of the public trust, and bias in the contact zone.

16:45	Chloe Emmott, PhD candidate, University of Greenwich	Archaeology and Colonial Power - The British Mandate and the Palestine Archaeological	The Palestine Archaeological Museum (PAM) formed a key part of the British Mandate Government's policy on antiquities. Despite inheriting many of its collections, and attitudes, from the previous Imperial Museum of the Ottoman government, The British Mandate museum was an element of narrative in which Britain 'rescues' Palestinian antiquities from the negligent Turks. I explore how the museum functioned as part of the fabric of colonial power - over both the intellectual and physical spheres - namely the production of knowledge and the material relics of the past. This cemented Britain's claim over both the physical territory of Palestine, which as 'The Holy Land', held a prominent place within British culture. Using archival research, I present the museum as a case study in how heritage and cultural resource management acted as part of the imperial ambitions of empires. I examine the museum and wider antiquities law were expressed as a political response to the previous Ottoman government's management; this is important as Ottoman antiquities law can be seen as a direct response to western exploitation of archaeological resources across Ottoman territory during the 19th century. My research illustrates how, throughout the history of the PAM, the Palestinians have been relegated to background actors in the management and construction of knowledge over their own history. I suggest that the PAM in both its Ottoman and Mandate incarnations, acted as part of a long tradition of using heritage to show the dominance of conquering powers in Jerusalem (St Laurent et al. 2013).
17:10	Alice Stevenson, UCL	Discussion	
17:30	END	END	END