Recensioner

Ethan Watrall & Lynne Goldstein (eds.), *Digital Heritage and Archaeology in Practice: Data, Ethics, and Professionalism*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2022. 338 p. ISBN: 9780813070070.

The anthology is part one of a two-volume set. The volume being reviewed here is subtitled "Data, Ethics, and Professionalism". It contains an introduction by the editors and twelve papers organised within the themes "Digital Methods and Computational Approaches for Archaeological Analysis and Interpretation", "Working with Digital Data in Heritage and Archaeology", and "Engaging with Ethics and Professional Issues in Digital Heritage and Archaeology". The other volume is focused on engagement, presentation and teaching and will be reviewed separately.

As the editors Watrall & Goldstein point out, there are no clear distinctions between the overarching themes, and several contributions could fit in either volume. Even so, the overall impression of volume 1 is that it is cohesive, and that the papers complement each other by offering varied perspectives on the issues of digital practice. The authors use instructive examples from their own experiences doing digital archaeology, which leave a more lasting impact than the obligatory theoretical overviews. The latter offer good reading lists for further studies, and help highlight both how quickly technology has changed, and how slowly practice. For instance, sticking with 2D over 3D when studying topographical environments (Opitz), or the extensive work needed to make use of legacy digital documentation, due to messy and deficient data practices (Jolene Smith).

As Sobotkova & Hermankova point out in their excellent chapter "Emergent archaeological realities and reusable datasets", this is partly a generational issue as senior supervisors rarely have a lot of experience in this field to pass on to their students. As a result research projects may have to spend a lot of time developing better field methods and cleaning up data to be able to achieve the goals set out in the beginning. See also Smith's chapter on "Practical approaches to managing messy data in archaeology".

Some digital archaeological methods require specialised research and development to work, Heath offers an example using JSON and Python programming to study Roman amphitheatres. However often it is simply frustrating cases of reinventing of the wheel, as good practices for digital data have been established by many disciplines already. Archaeologists cannot ignore this issue any longer. Watrall & Goldstein point out that there is hardly an area of archaeology today that is untouched by digital methods, so we are all digital archaeologists whether we like it or not. Which begs the question of why publish a physical book on something that is both omnipresent and also changing so rapidly any publication is liable to have a short shelf life? Apart from the fact that it is important to document and reflect on methodological changes, practices are clearly not changing fast enough and a lot in this book is still highly relevant.

Watrall & Goldstein want the publication to highlight that digital heritage is not just complex software and opaque workflows done by specialised researchers. By assembling writers from museums and archaeological companies as well as universities, representing both early career researchers and seniors, they have mostly succeeded in that aim. However, since the anthology is based on workshops organised by Michigan State University the contributors are predominantly from the United States and Canada, with the rest coming from Northern Europe or Australia. While the contributors' current affiliations obscure wider areas of research experiences, the practices highlighted in the chapters very much belong to "the global West". To what extent these are universal or not is up to the reader to keep in mind.

A common thread in many chapters, regardless of theme, is the importance of digital archaeological information being usable long-term, through preservation, interoperability, and openness. As noted by Ross & Ballsun-Stanton

in their chapter on research design, the scientific method rests upon the notion that it should be transparent and reproducible. This is becoming even more important when researchers are using complex software to analyse large amounts of data, so that the processes leading up to the results are not transparent to the human mind. In their chapter they argue for preregistration of research design and methodology. This is a time consuming and arduous process more suitable for laboratory and computational research projects, and I am not convinced it should be implemented broadly in archaeology.

Openness and sharing of data is definitely something archaeological research must become better at. Figures of diagrams or distribution maps without publication of all the underlying data means results can neither be tested for accuracy, nor added to through subsequent research by others. In analogue times this was sometimes the result of lack of space on printed pages, but in digital times with trusted digital repositories there is no excuse. This anthology offers a lot of good advice on how to plan for and prepare data for sharing. Done right, using controlled vocabularies and standardised data models, data from a large number of excavations and research projects can then be used to develop complex databases and information infrastructures that span time and space. The possibilities this opens up is shown in Buckland & Sjölander's chapter on "Approaches to Research Data Infrastructure for Archaeological Science". The same principles can be applied on smaller datasets as well, such as the coins from Sardis presented by Theresa Huntsman in her chapter.

Openness is not without its ethical issues however, and the final theme admirably focuses on this from several different aspects. Ethical challenges raised by the capture, preservation and publication of large 3D datasets is discussed by Heather Richards-Rissetto: from energy required for storage, to how far we should go in purportedly "realistic" recreations made from a fragmented material. Marwick & Wang give an excellent deep dive into Open Access, Open Data and the CARE data principles in their chapter. They highlight the gap that often exist between organisations' stated ideals and the reality in everyday work.

The CARE principles are a complement to the FAIR data principles. Whereas the latter outline how data can become accessible and reusable, the former set down principles for ethical and responsible practices – especially with regards to data from indigenous communities. This is definitively an important consideration, if we are not to recreate the mistakes of past generations in the rush to collect and analyse data. Carrie Heitman's "Theorizing the Archive and Ethics of Open Access Archaeology" is an interesting exploration of evolving ethical practices at Chaco Canyon, New Mexico and the digital Chaco Research Archive in the 2000s, trying to balance the needs of researchers with sensitivity towards different indigenous groups.

Another thought-provoking example is given in the chapter by Gupta, Nicholas & Blair on commercial archaeology in Canada, where publicly funded databases have been used by the government to develop costly proprietary and mandatory digital tools for archaeologists. This has created a gap between professional (primarily White) consultants and First Nations' community archaeologists. As they point out, digital technology can be used as a means of gatekeeping against disempowered and marginalised groups. Training opportunities as well as open source software is important to counteract this.

The anthology is concluded by Jeremy Huggett's chapter "Archaeological Practice and Digital Automation", a very interesting reflection on what is sometimes called the 4th Industrial Revolution being brought on by nanotechnology, biotechnology, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. Huggett divides the ways in which technology will aid – or even replace – humans within the field of archaeology: augmentation (assistance doing tasks, i.e. underwater robots, drones), automatization (doing human information work – i.e. data mining, automated identification), heteromation (tech devices doing the main work with human assistance, e.g. checking AI results). He asks if we are moving towards a practice with automated cognitive devices doing most of the work, and archaeologists mostly relegated to observer status?

Huggett points out that it is important for archaeologists to not abandon our responsibilities of critical engagement with technology which is in no way neutral. It is certainly something for all archaeologists to ponder as they sit in front of their computer or are standing in a field with a digital device: Am I in control – or is it?

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Matthias Friedrich, *Image and ornament in the early Medieval West: New perspectives on post-Roman art*. Cambridge 2023. 211 pp. ISBN 978-1-009-20777-5.

This book is about art and visual culture in western and northern Europe from the 5th to 8th century, covering Merovingian Francia and its fringes in central and north-west Europe (roughly equivalent to modern France, Germany, Benelux, Switzerland, Austria, northern Italy, England, and southern Scandinavia). The author Matthias Friedrich applies a broad concept of art that includes figural and non-figural images and ornaments, and that also encompasses 'minor arts' in form of decorated metalwork like e.g., dress-accessories and weapons, as well as other ornamented objects like vessels and instruments. Both in choice of topic and geographical area of research it unites areas that previously have tended to be divided by national and/or linguistic as well as academic boundaries and represents as such a welcome addition to this field of study. The book is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation in archaeology submitted in 2019, and parts of the book have also previously been the subject of an MA dissertation in History of Art. This background from two academic fields that often have been practiced separately, is reflected in the author's approach to his topic through a combination of archaeological and art historical methods which is central to the book. It constitutes what the author himself calls 'an archaeology of art' that he employs to bring in new perspectives to the study of post-Roman art in Merovingian Europe, which is another valuable contribution of this publication.

Friedrich has two main aims with the book. One is to scrutinize certain political, ethnic and religious categories that have exercised – and still have – a profound influence on our understanding of early medieval art and archaeology. This concerns the binary labels of 'Roman' and 'Germanic', and 'Christian' and 'pagan'. By criticizing the notions embedded in these categories, Friedrich wants to pave the way for asking new questions. This is the other main aim of the book: introducing new perspectives to the study of Merovingian art and material culture "beyond the paradigm of the 'Germanic'", as the author phrases it. The book is structured in accordance with these aims and has two main parts, each with two chapters. The first part addresses how the scholarly discussion on the art and archaeology of the early medieval period has been focused on the contradictions between Roman–Germanic and/or Christian–pagan, and as the author argues, consequently got caught up in and side-tracked by these dichotomies. The second part of the book is devoted to new perspectives on the art of the period based on contemporary theory. It is noticeable, however, that there is a slight imbalance in that the first part outweighs the second. This means that more than half the number of pages is used mainly on discussing previous interpretations, perhaps, as I will return to below, at the expense of the author's own contribution.

In the first chapter Friedrich scrutinizes the concept of the 'Germanic' and argues that three categories commonly regarded as the main characteristics of a pan-Germanic identity, *Heilsbild* (healing image), *Sakralkönigtum* (sacral kingship), and *Gefolgschaft* (retinue), are outdated. He further questions the dichotomies of Roman–barbarian and Christian–barbarian and argues that it is essential to introduce more subtle nuances than these simple binaries in the interpretations of post-Roman art if one is to engage with the topic in new ways. This is a refreshing perspective that lays the ground for the introduction of Friedrich's new approach. In chapter two the author substantiates his critique

through a discussion of renowned artefacts/works of art from the period with an emphasis on the scholarly discourse around these. Albeit allowing for some variance between the British, Scandinavian, and German/continental traditions, the critique nevertheless comes across as somewhat undifferentiated in the emphasis on the overriding importance of the 'Germanic paradigm' in all the previous research cited, and this reader ends up questioning if the ultimate aim of the author, i.e., bringing in new perspectives, really warrants such a detailed account. Also, if the author does not unintentionally "throw the baby out with the bathwater", in accepting the simplistic one-dimensionality of concepts like ethnicity and (social and political) identity as an underlying premise in the critique and in the subsequent rejection of almost every aspect concerning these phenomena in earlier interpretations. Friedrich demonstrates that many images frequently labelled pagan, Germanic or Christian can be traced back to Roman imperial iconography and argues that they represent the transformation of a Roman Imperial imagery that persisted into the early medieval west as symbols of power and authority.

In chapter three the theoretical framework for the author's own approach is presented, where he draws on newer anthropological and sociological theories concerning material agency and relational subjectivity. Friedrich adopts a comparative perspective based particularly on Alfred Gell's theories concerning the agency of art, with the intention to uncover the core principles of how specific works of art functioned, and to explain how art acted on the recipient. Interestingly, he links this to the "bewilderment principle", the principle of "varietas" or variety, which is central to his interpretation of the artwork of the period. In chapter four Friedrich further develops this principle as it functioned in the early Middle Ages creating an effect through complex mixtures of styles, colours, and materials. He presents four main components of varietas in the art and material culture of this period: technology and craft, form and style, surface and texture, colour and contrast, and exemplifies this through a series of interesting case studies. His main argument is that variety constituted "a basic aesthetic principle shared across late antique and early medieval Europe and the Mediterranean", representing a cross-cultural phenomenon that served to bond the various ethnic and religious fractions in these areas through blurring the boundaries between them. On this point his approach is systematic, clearly presented and well argued, and credibly opens up for new ways of understanding the art of the European post-Roman world.

The book is richly illustrated with both black and white pictures and drawings as well as coloured plates that serve their purpose well in helping the reader along and at the same time substantiating the author's argumentation. The inclusion of illustrations of the replicas/reconstructions of the pattern-welded sword from Beckum as well as the Trossingen lyre and the Unterhaching disc brooch are particularly effectful in demonstrating the now lost complexity of these objects in colours, materials and form, displaying their "varietas" in all its splendour and as they were conceived by their contemporaries. The book is also convincingly argued when showing how the artwork captivated and "'bewilder[ed]' its viewer through intricate and skilful artistry". This part of the text is credible, and the author makes an important observation when demonstrating how the art in the post-Roman West shared significant characteristics with contemporary Mediterranean and/or Byzantine art. In this regard, Friedrich succeeds in bringing the discussion on beyond the categories of the 'Roman–Germanic' and the 'Christian–pagan'. Paradoxically, though, he still ends up devoting rather a large number of pages in criticising the same categories through a detailed "deconstruction" of works by earlier researchers, especially since the "new perspectives" part of the book also includes a review of research concerning animal art styles that mostly represents a repetition of the critique raised in the two first chapters. In my opinion, the book would have merited on reserving more space for Friedrich's own contributions, which really are both interesting and important. Key points in the author's argumentation are only raised during the last four pages that constitute the concluding chapter of the book. Here Friedrich finally engages

in a discussion of the impact of the art in the widely different societies that existed within the examined area. Here he also returns to the hinted connection between the enduring Roman imperial imagery, as argued in chapter two, and the "varietas" principle/phenomenon, but this is only treated in a summary form. Thus, this part of this otherwise interesting contribution now stands more as an outline of the unexplored potential of the art in question than as a conclusion of the present work. Hopefully, we should see this as a promise of further future contributions by the author on this fascinating theme.

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Monika Stobiecka, *Theorizing archaeological museum studies: From artefact to exhibit*. London/New York 2023. 172 s. ISBN 9781032356532.

I *Theorizing archaeological museum studies* tar Monika Stobiecka ett brett teoretiskt grepp. Bokens abstract beskriver det så här: "The central focus of this book explores the relationship between museums and their dominant paradigms, on the one hand, and new approaches and theories in archaeology, on the other". Stobiecka vill förstå arkeologiska museer genom ett tätt filter av teorier, företrädesvis sådana som diskuterades livligt under perioden från sent 1980-tal till 2010-tal. Det handlar alltså om välkända teoretiker för en svensk arkeologisk publik – Hodder, Olsen, Witmore, Shanks m.fl. – inom tankeområden som "interpretative archaeology", "social archaeology", "symmetrical archaeology" och "the material turn".

En sak behöver sägas direkt – bokens titel är missvisande. Den lurar läsaren att tro att boken ska handla om arkeologiskt inriktade museer, och innan läsningen såg jag därför framför mig museer som exempelvis Historiska Museet i Stockholm eller Moesgaard Museum i Aarhus. Det gör den inte. Den handlar om andra typer av museer, väldigt specifika sådana. Föreställ dig en huvudort på någon av öarna i Kykladerna i grekiska Egeiska havet. På det lokala museet visas fynd från utgrävningar på ön. Se framför dig montrar och piedestaler som visar föremål som en halv marmortorso, keramikfragment, ett skulpterat marmoransikte med skadad näsa, metallfragment från vapenuppsättningar, klädesdetaljer, reliefer från något gravmonument och fragment av oljelampor. Föremål på rad, uppvisade som konsthistoriska objekt. Vid varje föremål finns en liten skylt som anger sakord i fyndkatalogen, inventarienummer, fyndplats och, ibland, datering. Det är sådana museer som boken handlar om. Fast, egentligen inte. Det är sådana museer som författaren målar upp som sin illustration av museer som hon ser behöver utvecklas. I boken diskuterar hon hur hon ser att detta kan göras: genom att museerna omfamnar och engagerar sig i den arkeologiska teoretiska diskussion som nämnts i stycket ovan.

Arbetet presenteras i tre delar under rubrikerna "Artefacts", "Exhibits" och "Artefacts and Exhibits". Som framgår av rubrikerna står utställda arkeologiska föremål i fokus. Diskussionen är mångfacetterad och bred – emellanåt konkret och nära museer, föremål eller utställningar, andra gånger flyende och vinglig med utvikningar som Stobiecka har svårigheter att tydligt återkoppla till bokens huvudtema. Några av de många aspekter av föremål och utställningar som diskuteras är arkeologiska definitioner av artefakter, nya sätt att förstå materialitet, konserveringspraktiker, tolkning, temporalitet, utställningsrummets visuella och känslotriggande upplevelser, digitala teknologier och konstnärlig forskning.

Den för mig finaste läsningen i boken är de kapitel som ryms i delen "Exhibits". Här redovisar Stobiecka sina analyser av två museer: Akropolismuseet i Aten och Museo dell'Ara Pacis i Rom. Stobiecka går i närkontakt med båda museerna. Hon undersöker detaljer i utställningarna, vad som ställs ut och vad som förmedlas. I Akropolismuseet hittar hon berättelser som inte bara förmedlar konsthistoria, utan också pekar framåt. Detta gör hon i de delar av utställningen som fokuserar på framtiden genom att de berättar om planerna för hur Akropolisklippan ska rekonstrueras genom konservatorers och antikvariers arbeten. Stobiecka menar att

genom att blanda dåtid i form av utställda föremål från Akropolisklippan, nutid i form av utställningsupplevelsen och framtid i berättelser om kulturarv i en process av förändring, konservering och återuppbyggnad, blir museet till en levande upplevelse i linje med vad hon ser att andra museer kan bli. Själv har jag inte riktigt sett samma saker i Akropolismuseet de gånger jag varit där. Jag tycker personligen att återuppbyggnadsivern är oförklarad i utställningen. Valet att i utställningen inte gestalta den tidsperiod då Parthenontemplet på Akropolisklippan var en moské ser jag som framtidsfrånvänt, som ett instrumentellt raderande av det förflutna i en upplevd samtidspolitisk omöjlighet att inkluderande gestalta muslimsk historia i relation till en kontext som ses som Europas vagga. Detta ser inte Stobiecka. Men, samtidigt får hennes blick på museet mig att se saker jag inte sett tidigare.

I Museo dell'Ara Pacis hittar hon tvärvetenskapliga ingångar i utställningsarbetet. Då museet byggdes nytt och invigdes 2006, ersatte det ett tidigare fascistiskt monument tillägnat Augustus fredsaltare. Stobiecka visar hur det nya museet, både i sin arkitektur och i utställningens gestaltning, erbjuder ett tydligt alternativ till det gamla museet. Speciellt nyfiken blir jag på de delar av utställningen där en botanisk forskare och curator återskapat floran på altarets reliefer till en årstidsberättelse om natur och kultur i symbios och växters betydelse för Roms befolkning åren efter vår tideräknings början. Detta är intressant läsning.

Stobiecka driver sin text med hjälp av teoretiska diskussioner, så pass mycket att jag som läsare ibland undrar om det jag läser verkligen handlar om museiutställningar analyserade med hjälp av teorier? Eller, läser jag *de facto* i stället om teorier illustrerade med hjälp av museiutställningar? Som texten presenteras nu är den intressant läsning för teoretiskt intresserade. De som letar efter museologiska analyser har lite svårare att hitta rätt i boken. Här hade en aktiv redaktör som ägnat tid åt texten kunnat göra underverk genom att hjälpa författaren med att, ur en intressant, faktarik men något rörig och omständlig text, tydligt skriva fram de teoretiskt intressanta analyser som görs och bättre knyta dessa till museistudier.

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