Introduction: Museum Archaeology

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Abstract

This chapter outlines the rationale for a volume devoted to Museum Archaeology and argues that it is the concept of 'archaeological context' that provides a disciplinary centre. This entails a shift from curation of single objects to the curation of relationships among objects, archives, fieldsites, and people. Museum Archaeology can and should be a critical awareness of the histories and agencies that form assemblages, a reflexive practice for ongoing archaeological documentation and analysis, and a responsive, sensitive, and community-engaged approach to interpretation and access. How these principles are developed through the volume is presented here, alongside a summary of the seven themed sections: (1) collecting, categorizing, and challenging histories; (2) contemporary agencies of curation and communities of practice; (3) the spaces and places of museums; (4) alternative materialities: beyond finds; (5) fieldwork in the museum; (6) exhibitionary cultures; and (7) expanding and transcending the museum: social justice and digital frontiers.

Keywords

Museum Archaeology, archaeological context, reflexive practice, community-engagement, curation, exhibition

Introduction

This Handbook brings together critical engagements with the legacies of, and futures for, global archaeological collections. It aims to challenge and transcend the common

misconception that museum archaeology is simply a set of procedures for managing and exhibiting assemblages. Instead, through the chapters assembled here, museum archaeology emerges as a dynamic area of reflexive research and practice in dialogue with, and as an integral part of, the discipline of archaeology and public discourse. Chapters problematize and suggest new ways of thinking about historic, contemporary, and future relationships between archaeological fieldwork and museums, as well as the array of institutional and cultural paradigms through which archaeological enquiries are mediated.

These concerns are grounded in the realities of a selection of institutions and case studies internationally. As such, the common sector refrain 'best practice' is not be assumed to solely emanate from developed countries or European philosophies, but instead as emerging from and being accommodated within local concerns and diverse museum cultures. The question must always remain as to what might be, in any particular context, appropriate museology (Kreps 2008) in which approaches to collections are adapted to local needs and conditions. Therefore, while this volume aims to be inclusive, it cannot, and should not, claim to be comprehensive or prescriptive. Rather, the chapters serve to highlight some of the distinctive sets of skills, knowledges, and dispositions that characterize work with archaeological collections. And by collections it is not just archaeological finds themselves that are relevant. Several studies in this volume embrace a broader range of materialities in the museum than has traditionally been addressed by examining archival field notes, photographic media, archaeological samples, replicas, and intangible heritage, alongside artefacts.

In an environment where fieldwork in many parts of the world is increasingly problematic, impossible, or unnecessary, museum collections may become a more vital resource for

future archaeological reflection. And where opportunities and justifications for excavation do remain, the museum—as a place with existing collections, public engagement, and archaeological expertise, as well as for future care—are a resource for consideration prior to and during, not just the end of, fieldwork. Museum archaeology in this sense is also understood laterally as a sensibility since it concerns not just bounded institutional practice but also a set of skills and knowledge relevant to archaeological collections that might not necessarily reside with a museum setting. This means recognizing the legacies that archaeology creates. Curation needs to be considered at every stage of an archaeological project and should be as integral a part of archaeological training as excavation and survey.

Throughout, questions are asked about what gets prioritized, researched, and represented in museums, by whom, how, and why. In doing so, this volume responds to broader societal anxieties and the 'crisis of representation' experienced in both the museum sector and the discipline of archaeology in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In museum studies, a wider paradigm shift was recognized in the 1990s from an 'old museology' too focussed upon methods to the 'new museology' that questioned the purposes of museums (Desvallées et al. 1992; Vergo 1989), and which has seen museums transformed from 'collection-driven' organizations to 'visitor-centred' organizations (Anderson 2004; Hudson 1998, 43). That museums exist to simply to collect, preserve, interpret, educate, and research is no longer a certainty. Such core practices are historically produced and socially embedded. The rift that emerged in 2019 when the International Council of Museum's (ICOM) proposed a new definition of the museum exposed these ongoing pressures over how museums articulate their purposes (Mairesse 2019; see Chapter 26). With global crises and social justice agendas, from climate change to calls for decolonization, and from repatriation claims to Black Lives Matter movements, museums

find themselves under constant public scrutiny. This 'global contemporary' is, as Knell (2019, 2) argues, a museological age. Like museum studies, archaeology has also seen calls to be more 'politically effective… in the service of social justice' (Hamilakis 2018, 518), with concerns around the production and deployment of archaeological narratives (summary in Kosiba 2019).

This volume is therefore predicated upon a museum archaeology that is distinctly political, attentive to societal discourses and its intersections with class, religion, gender, sexuality, and race. Archaeologists may dig up past material, museums may preserve it for the future, but collections are always operational in the present. The seven thematic sections of this book variously take this challenge up. Some chapters provide broad theoretical synthesis of key areas, others develop their themes through case studies, with coverage of the Palaeolithic through to the more recent past. None are intended to establish scholarly canon. Rather this collection provides a broad range of departure points for the discussion of museum archaeology. This introduction first positions museum work within the discipline of archaeology in order to articulate more expansively the principles upon which this volume is built.

Defining and Expanding Museum Archaeology

Like the discipline of archaeology, there is a burgeoning and daunting corpus of museum studies scholarship (for overviews see Carbonell 2012; Macdonald 2006). Yet the two communities of discourse rarely intersect in a substantial or sustained way. Their most frequent meeting point is in the construction of archaeological narratives within exhibitionary media (Barker 2010; Chan 2011; Copley 2010; Levy 2006; Merriman 1999;

Moser 2010; Owens 1996). Where collections more widely are concerned, museum archaeology is frequently characterized in terms of a vexed relationship between institutions and the discipline. Issues such as how to manage storage against the exponential influx of excavated material (e.g. Marquardt et al. 1982; Kersel 2015; Chapters 11 and 13) or how to address repatriation (Atalay 2006; Harlin 2019; Jones 2005; Chapters 3 and 12), including human remains (Squires et al 2020; Chapters 2, 3, and 20), are recurring and important quandaries. However, there are many additional ones encompassed within the field of museum archaeology that are equally deserving of attention around themes such as digital interfaces, the antiquities market, replicas, destructive analysis, community engagement, visitor evaluation, and contemporary art interventions.

In archaeology, museums and collections are often situated at the periphery of disciplinary perspectives, as a search through the indexes of a sample of widely used English-language introductory texts reveals (e.g. Renfrew and Bahn 2015; Urban and Schortman 2012; but see Ellis 2006). The impression gained from cursory surveys of such Anglo-American archaeology titles is that the museum was only significant in the early period of disciplinary development and that today it sits at the end of the archaeological project, an afterthought in dissemination, public engagement, and accountability rather than as a site of archaeological knowledge production in its own right. This marginalization of museums from current archaeological thinking is a common problem in many parts of the world, from Venezuela (Antczak et al. 2019, 59) to Serbia (Cvjetićanin 2014, 595).

In archaeological theory, museums generally attract short shrift, perhaps surprisingly given that the purview of theory is why we do archaeology, the social and cultural context of archaeology, and issues of interpretation (e.g. Johnson 2020, 2). These are central issues for

museums. As Chapman and Wylie (2016) argue the transformation of material remains into archaeological evidence does not simply rely on discovery, but is mediated by theory, background knowledge, and technical skill, as well as social and institutional infrastructures. Museums do not feature in Chapman and Wylie's (2016) index, but as complex social institutions, they are a widespread and longstanding site in which material traces reside and that shape and mediate data in particular ways. Shanks and Tilley (1992) engaged in sustained theoretical critique of museum archaeology, but while they recognized the museum as 'the main institutional connection between archaeology as a profession and discipline, and wider society' (Shanks and Tilley 1992, 68), their chapter devoted to 'a critique of the museum as an ideological institution' was limited to the examination of archaeological narratives within gallery spaces. As Wingfield (2017, 595) has observed the equation of museums with archive or display 'fails to do justice to the modes of archaeological work and knowledge production that are enabled by museum settings'. A more theoretically diverse archaeological perspective would further reveal, however, that museums can also hinder knowledge production when there is an absence of relevant collections or expertise brought to bear on them from Indigenous archaeologists (Atalay 2006), descendent communities (Battle-Baptiste 2007; Singleton 1997), or other minoritized groups such as LGBTQIA+ (Chantraine and Soares 2020; Voss 2008).

This is not to say that collections have been entirely ignored by archaeologists. Over the years there have been voices advocating for the value of collections research (e.g. Brown 1981; Chapman 1981). And for areas of archaeology more strongly allied to art-history, such as Egyptology and Classics, museum work has always retained a more central status. Nevertheless, it remains a truism that 'the pathology' of digging (Tilley 1989, 275) epitomizes the discipline, privileged as a 'core method' (Edgeworth 2011, 44; see also

Nilsson 2011). The potential of museum resources and processes to contribute to contemporary archaeological debates has, nonetheless, gained traction in the 2010s in a series of papers (Friberg and Huvila 2019; Friedman and Janz 2018; Harris et al. 2019; Luby et al. 2013; Voss 2012), edited volumes (Allen and Ford 2019), and journal special issues (Benden and Taft 2019; Flexner 2016), with calls to 'dig less, catalogue more' (King 2016), to 'excavate existing collections' (Schiappacasse 2019), and to 'get out of the trench and back into the museum' (Osborne 2015). Yet as Whitley (2016) helpfully points out, construing an antithesis between two sites of archaeological practice, fieldwork and museum work, is unhelpful. Knowledge is certainly created at the 'trowel's edge' (Hodder 2003, 58), but fieldwork's value can only be fully realized in dialogue with other stages in the interpretive process and in the juxtapositions with other collections of material.

In higher education, 'archaeologists typically do not learn about curatorial issues and practices in school' (Sullivan and Childs 2003, 1; Swain 2007, 140; but see Chapter 25). In the museum sector there are specialist professional organizations, such as the UK's Society of Museum Archaeology that do produce their own publications, but otherwise there are few books devoted to specifically to museum archaeology. Much of it is produced as policy documents by the sector, 'grey literature', rather than through academic publication (e.g. Chapter 13). Dedicated scholarship includes older publications centred around 'curation' and these take a largely methodological approach to collections management (e.g. Sullivan and Childs 2003; Pearce 1990). More recent books collate pertinent and critical topics that recur throughout the otherwise scattered literature (Skeates 2017; Swain 2007). The opening line to Swain's preface in *An Introduction to Museum Archaeology* directly identifies museum archaeology as 'the discipline of archaeology as it affects museums' (Swain 2007, xv). This implies, however, that museums have little to contribute

to archaeology in return. While Swain acknowledges that the relationship between museums and archaeological fieldwork, and between publics and archaeology, is not necessarily linear (Swain 2007, 12), how this is the case remains to be substantially developed. It might refer to any fieldwork an archaeologist employed in a museum actively participates in, an activity which is often perceived to be a proxy for professional archaeological identities (e.g. Biddle 1994). Navigating the interstices between collections, publics, and the discipline, however, requires a distinctive set of experiences.

As a form of critical practice, museum work is conditioned by intersections of internal and external demands and constraints, as well as conflicting priorities and knowledge cultures. Internally, while the common characterization of the curator is of an individual with full autonomy over collections, in reality they are usually one member of a wider team of professionals that has an influence on practice and meaning making, including those in visitor services, IT and digital development, marketing and design, conservation, education, and management. Meanwhile, the remits of those who have responsibility over archaeological assemblages varies considerably, often being contingent on funding, stakeholders, and management, from large national institutions to small, local independent charities. In turn, the external pressures of politics and economics further shapes the relationship of museums to wider archaeological practices. Rescue archaeology (as opposed to research-led archaeology initiated largely by universities) is one case in point, with the evolution of what is variously been called contract archaeology or development led archaeology (Boyle 2019; Högberg and Fahlander 2017) impacting on storage strategies, access, and interpretive possibilities (see Chapters 11 and 13).

Bearing the above in mind, the principles upon which this volume are predicted are as follows. Museum Archaeology can and should be a critical awareness of the histories, agencies, and conditions that form assemblages, a reflexive practice for ongoing archaeological documentation and analysis, and a responsive, sensitive, and community-engaged approach to knowledge production, interpretation, and access. In other words, it is set of sensitivities to working with collections with a view to making their past and present uses transparent to multiple stakeholders for the future. Heritage work is not just about the past, it is future making (Harrison et al. 2020). This should concern all archaeologists, not just those working in a museum, from university lecturers with boxes of finds in their offices to research scientists requesting access to material for sampling (Chapter 19). It is an area of archaeology that is particularly attuned to the importance of facilitating, through collections, two-way dialogues across contemporary society and the discipline. Therefore, it is much more than the dissemination of archaeological discoveries, but part of the ongoing project of interpretation and repeated contextualization of that material whether it is on display, in storage, or otherwise in use, contributing to the questions asked and the narratives constructed around assemblages. Where museum institutions are concerned, they should be recognized as a distinctive set of spaces in which archaeological knowledge has been and continues to be constructed.

It is the concept of 'archaeological context' that provides disciplinary common ground for what lies at the heart of museum archaeology. Context as defined in archaeology often fixes the archaeological object in a singular, static space (e.g. Darvill 2008)—the find spot—but knowledge is equally produced through movement, circulation, and change. The notion of life histories (Kopytoff 1986), cultural biographies (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Joy 2009), or itineraries of objects (Joyce and Gillespie 2015)—which have had

considerable currency in archaeological theory and method generally—has gone some way towards identifying these processes. Often, however, these concepts are deployed as a means of interpreting past social lives of things prior to their acquisition or else artefact biographies end with the arrival of objects in the museum (e.g. Holtorf 2002). Yet knowledge production occurs beyond the field of recovery, and the archaeological object is often materially as well as interpretively emergent through ongoing disciplinary interventions within the museum. Although the concept of object biographies as adopted by museums has been criticized (Hicks 2021), its emphasis on the mutually constitutive relationship of people and things—how they *both* 'gather time, movement, and change' (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 169)—means that object biographies remain useful, especially for elucidating the multiple agencies involved in collection formation and for challenging individualistic narratives of accomplishment that frame most museum exhibits (see Chapters 1, 14, 15, and 19).

Hodder (1986, 122) reminded the discipline of archaeology of the etymology of the word 'context', with a root in the Latin word *contexere,* meaning to connect or weave together. Rather than a discrete place, context is understood to be a process. This is the sort of work that museum archaeology entails; tacking back and forth between artefacts and their associated documentation, products of fieldwork, historical interventions, and their associated communities, together with encounters in museum display, public engagement, and study. It is through these means that archaeological knowledge continues to be produced and queried. Such an ongoing process challenges the widespread characterization of the archaeological record as a 'finite' resource since the possibilities for connections are multiple, with the infinite promise of new insights and reinterpretations (Perry 2019). Theoretically, therefore, museum archaeology has a lot to offer a self-reflexive discipline.

Methodologically, it requires a shift from curation of single objects to the curation of relationships among objects, archives, fieldsites, and people, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate.

Collecting, Categorizing and Challenging Histories

What constitutes an archaeological collection? Is it comprised only of material that was formally excavated or otherwise derived from fieldwork? Where does that leave antiquarian collections? Is it related to chronological range? Definitive classification is unhelpful as the terms 'archaeology' and 'museums' operate differently throughout the world. A project aimed at identifying and characterizing the scope and significance of the world archaeology collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, for instance, quickly encountered the difficulties in distinguishing ethnographic from archaeological material (Hicks 2010; see also Chapter 18). Recent collecting at the Pitt Rivers equally challenges disciplinary borders with newly excavated material registered into the collection including a USB stick (Moshenska 2014, PRM 2016.47.1) and pieces of fencing from the UK Calais border acquired as part of an exercise in landscape archaeology (Hicks and Mallet 2018; PRM 2020.25.1). Ucko (1994, 237), drawing from Zimbabwean approaches to heritage, rejected any notion that archaeology is, or should be, restricted to the study of only a 'remote' past and explicitly considered archaeological concerns as incorporating the ethnographic, the oral historical, the literary, as well as the archaeological past. More recently, archaeological collections have extended to those born digital, such as imagery of African rock art curated at the British Museum (Anderson et al. 2018).

What is considered archaeological is ultimately contingent upon histories of collection and display, the disciplinary practices and methods through which material has been recognized, and cultural geographies of museum development, inclusive of nationalist, imperialist, and colonialist agendas. Specifically addressing then the histories of archaeology and institutions is key to untangling these issues, as well as acting as an invaluable reflection point for all archaeologists and visitors so that they confront the basic methods that have been applied to study evidence, including the very production of 'archaeological culture' as Chapter 1 highlights. Here, Delley and Schlanger address how the histories of archaeology are beginning to come to the fore in exhibitionary narratives, as illustrated by a range of examples from across Europe. They consider how museums have long been central to the making of archaeological knowledge, such as the form and nature of chronologies and 'archaeological industries'. Notably, the accumulation of antiquities was not only one of the foundations of archaeology as a discipline (e.g. Lucas 2001), but also a driver for the development of fieldwork methodologies (Stevenson 2019, 32–33). Delley and Schlanger further note that the skills of historians of archaeology have particular relevance for museum archaeology, for responding to calls for decolonization and repatriation. Chapter 1, further points to museum architecture as a powerful frame for creating meaning (see also Moser 2010), making the museum building itself in need of interpretation. It can cast its own classificatory lens and an item displayed in an art gallery will likely have its aesthetics emphasized over its archaeological history, or if placed in a cultural centre its contemporary relevance to local communities is likely to be foregrounded.

Delley and Schlanger end their contribution noting that museums provide an opportunity for raising questions and provoking reflections among visitors and scholars alike. This

echoes Shanks and Tilley's (1992) critique of the museum, which called for sensitive and critically self-reflexive displays. This is now common parlance within the 'museums are not neutral' rhetoric, decolonization movements, and social justice agendas (Sandell and Nightingale 2012). However, it is not simply a matter of addressing display. Rather, inequalities and biases suffuse all areas of museum activity, staffing, and infrastructure—from collecting to cataloguing, storage to staffing, marketing to management—and these areas equally need to be challenged (Emerson and Hoffman 2019; Onciul 2015, 240; Turner 2019; Vawda 2019). This work is vital as it impinges upon perceptions of archaeology, the construction of archaeological narratives, and the possibilities for engagement between various archaeologists and publics. Colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism enabled and informed the nature of these collections. Decisions made in categorizing, labelling, and displaying have created silences; they have frequently elided Indigenous histories, and overlooked class, gender, and racial identities. In so doing, museums have historically been dehumanizing, ignoring the multiple dimensions of human experience, including emotion and affect.

Nowhere is the confluence of colonial histories and emotions more significant than in cases of Indigenous Ancestral Remains collections, subject of two chapters, 2 and 3. In Chapter 2, Fforde et al. consider the uncomfortable history of the removal and scientific use of Indigenous Ancestral Remains, noting that narratives too often focus on the principally white men who took them and the institutions that house them. They argue that focusing only on histories of collecting as intellectual, objective, and scientific enterprises is reductive and that including evidence from the archives for emotional affects provides a deeper understanding of Indigenous grievances and calls for repatriation. Such examination, moreover, disrupts the often to glib refrain that previous collecting habits

were 'of their time' when it is clear that removals were frequently understood to be immoral and looters were cognisant of Indigenous opposition. Their chapter also underscores the challenges of working with archives, their biases and silences, all of which need consideration in the construction of collecting histories.

In their second contribution (Chapter 3) Fforde et al. develop this theme of emotional engagement further through a historical review of the human remains repatriation debate. This discourse has broadened from simply historical analyses that informs arguments 'for' and 'against', to ones that challenge a polarization between the assumed 'objective' claims of science and the 'subjective' cultural claims of Indigenous peoples (see also Chapters 6 and 12). A wide range of emotions are involved, as explored through Hawaiian and Australian Aboriginal examples. Museum procedures distance the meaning of human remains, but seeking commonalities and empathy, for instance, may be once means of shifting attitudes and associated practices. Recognition of the overlooked emotional aspects of repatriation, they argue, across museum professionals, archaeologists, and Indigenous claimants facilitates repatriation practices that are orientated toward healing and reconciliation.

Contemporary Agencies of Curation and Communities of Practice

While part one addresses historical agencies behind archaeological collections, this next section turns to the relationships museum staff form with a variety of contemporary groups that continue to actively shape archaeological collections, that are represented by such assemblages, that look after them, and that are able to access and utilize them. There has been increasing consideration of the range of external stakeholders that collections are relevant for as museums have made efforts to become more collaborative and inclusive.

The challenge is that the communities that work with museums are highly variable, heterogenous, and intersectional (for a summary see Crooke 2010). This section presents just a few related to archaeological material; antiquities market actors (Chapter 4), communities that live on archaeological sites (Chapter 5), Indigenous groups (Chapter 6), dis/Abled individuals (Chapter 7), and local groups in post-conflict zones (Chapter 8). Other specialist groups, such as metal detectorists (Chapter 28) or vulnerable groups (Chapter 26) are discussed in the last section of the volume.

Various different professions other than archaeologists have contributed to archaeological collections. In terms of museum acquisition, the art market has historically had a prominent role in supply. However, the establishment of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property has impelled museums not to acquire cultural property of another state in cases where it may have been illegally removed. Following incidents in the 1990s, such as the Medici scandal and exposes of Sotheby's dealing of illicit antiquities, archaeologists have been increasingly vocal in reprimanding institutions for purchasing objects from dealers with no secure collection history and which are likely to have been looted (Renfrew 1999). The forging of export licences and associated documentation, together with lapses in due diligence has, however, meant that looted artefacts still enter prestigious museums (MacKenzie et al. 2020). But the relationship between museums and the antiquities market is more complex still as Yates and Smith's Chapter 4 explores. They argue that museums act not only as receivers from the illicit trade in antiquities but are also influencers upon it.

Even though market actors as are usually far removed from archaeological sites, recent research on illicit antiquities, such as that conducted by the Trafficking Culture Network (MacKenzie et al. 2020), has demonstrated the imperative to address demand in rich nations as an active driver of site looting. This work has also highlighted the need not demonize those who live in proximity to archaeological sites and who may seek to commercialize finds as source of basic income, individuals termed 'subsistence diggers'. In Chapter 5, Bezerra and Ferreira call on archaeologists to look beyond this category 'subsistence diggers' and re-evaluate how other agents collect and store archaeological material in communities local to sites. Through an examination of collecting practices in the Brazilian Amazon, they point to the affective reasons for individuals to collect and curate materials found by their homes, attitudes that indicate people's positive engagement with heritage which need not be seen as destructive activities. Although the creation of 'affective museums' in peoples' homes can come into tension with national heritage legislation, these activities reveal other modes of thought too often ignored by archaeologists and museums, but which also produce insights into the past.

Taking on board the multiple ways of knowing and engaging with the past is also central to Osorio Sunnucks' Chapter 6 on decentring the museum in Indigenous community engagement. While in ethnographic museum models, such as the widely-cited 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997), have found prominence as a framework for opening dialogue with source communities, archaeology faces a particular issue with 'allochronism', which has alienated contemporary people even further from their own histories and collections through the spectacle of exotic and distant civilizations. Osorio Sunnucks directly addresses this issue through two case studies of how contemporary ancestral knowledge and practice in Yucatan is incorporated into museums with archaeological (pre-Columbian)

Maya collections and which contributes substantially to archaeological knowledge. In so doing, she brings attention to multi-lingual world museologies that are often overlooked by anglophone publications.

The literature on accommodating Indigenous communities' ways of working with collections and respect for their access requirements has been growing. In contrast, there has been very little scholarship around enabling access to archaeological collections and museums by those with other variable physical needs. Hunt and Kitchen's Chapter 7 looks at the inequalities and lack of inclusion experienced by dis/Abled people working and volunteering in, and visiting, UK archaeological sites and museums. They note that the case studies that have been published focus on what archaeology can offer dis/Abled people, rather than what a diverse volunteer and workforce can offer archaeology. Their chapter places enabled archaeology at the intersection of the social model of disability and Crip Theory, bringing attention to the language used around access and calls for more research on museum workforces in order to advocate for greater inclusivity.

In Chapter 8, Johnson and Lione consider the creation of heritage communities in post-conflict Iraq as a key part of a humanitarian response. The importance of curating relationships rather than simply objects is evident in this context where museum work needs to be particularly accustomed to local needs and resources. For example, rather than simply importing international ideas and materials, Iraqi museum staff are supported in developing their own methodologies for evaluating the appropriateness of locally available conservation materials. Here the role of an 'appropriate museology' (Kreps 2008), that recognizes local knowledge of place and material which is relevant to how collections are managed and cared for, is vital. Nevertheless, these initiatives are set within a complex

network of international interest and initiatives, requiring cultural, as well as heritage, diplomacy, which is a key focus of Chapter 8.

Locating Museums and Collections

The spatial turn in the historical analysis of knowledge has emphasized the constitutive significance of place in the production and circulation of theories and practice (Livingstone 2003). Where collections are situated and where museums are sited, profoundly frame engagements with and interpretations of archaeological material. Some collections may not leave the site of their excavation and be retained *in situ* at specially built site museums. As discussed by Papaioannou in Chapter 9, defining a site museum is historically complicated. Landscapes of archaeological encounter and their framing by the heritage industry define a set of overlapping concepts from open-air museums—which recreate life in the past based on archaeological evidence and experimental archaeology but not by necessarily displaying original archaeological materials (Paardekooper 2012)—to ecomuseums which foreground lived community memories and histories, the intangible dimensions of heritage, as much as the tangible remains of sites, monuments, and artefacts. Papaioannou's example of the Museum at the Lowest Place on Earth in Jordan highlights a definition of site museum that emerges through the intersections of multiple stakeholder interests, balancing the needs of active archaeological site researchers, the requirements of collections storage and documentation, relevance for local communities, as well as the demands of tourists and state actors.

In other cases, tourism may be the over-riding motivation for archaeological representations leading to concerns over authenticity, commercialization, and trivialization.

These contestations may become particularly fraught at sites of 'negative' or dark' heritage (Meskell 2002). Engmann (Chapter 10), for instance, invites archaeologists to rethink the role and importance of the traces of the transatlantic slave trade in narrating stories of transgenerational trauma, dislocation, and reclamation. Through discussion of heritage tourism at Ghanaian forts and castles Engmann further draws attention to the multiple and emotive narratives that coalesce at these sites, from the local to the global, often resulting in disagreement and clashes between African diaspora publics and local Ghanaians. Engmann's chapter is testament to the power of location and to interpretive possibilities in the absence of archaeological finds themselves, but where archaeological traces and minimal exhibitory intervention nonetheless profoundly shape visitor meaning making. In this context, Engmann notes the role of guides who form an integral part of the interpretive experience, a reminder that meaning making in is not the sole prerogative of archaeological specialists.

More commonly, artefacts are removed from archaeological sites to separate storage facilities subsequent to their excavation. The consequences of decades of this practice are clear. Fieldwork has often framed in a 'crisis narrative' whereby the archaeological record needs protection, rescue, or preservation lest it be lost. Yet in museums there has been decades of panic over a very different crisis; the 'curation crisis' in which there is simply too much archaeology and it is an issue worldwide from Japan (Barnes and Okita 1999) to Jordan (Kersel 2015). Display strategies may put singular pieces onto a pedestal, but behind the scenes the mainstays of archaeological collections are 'bulk finds'. In the US alone this translates to billions of artefacts in storage (Chapter 11). And that includes not just objects, but associated documentation in a wide variety of formats from paper files to out-dated digital media on floppy disks. As archaeological theory and practice has

developed, so too has the nature of the heritage it creates. The emergence of environmental archaeology in the early twentieth century and processual archaeology in the 1960s increased the types of material collected, while the establishment of development-led archaeology further expanded the volume of finds sent to storage. Childs note that this long-recognized 'crisis' in US archaeology is now a 'chronic' problem, but in her contribution (Chapter 11) she also outlines positive initiatives that take more holistic approaches to developing collection use.

In finding new ways of accessing stored collections, the focus is not just upon the practical issue of object management, but upon establishing more meaningful relationships between people, and between people and objects, in order to challenge lazy stereotypes of 'dusty', 'hidden' storerooms. Many repositories are well organized, albeit underused. But these tropes also reveal that storage is not just a technical issue; it is equally ideological and political (Brusius and Singh 2018). More creative solutions to provide academic and public access may include investing in visible or visitable storage, devising loan boxes or mobile museums to take collections to different audiences including schools (Jain 1994; see also chapter 26), or proactively encouraging use through event programming, such as the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA's) #ArchiveLottery, allowing the public to randomly request stored finds through social media (Corsini 2017). Childs' and Boyle's chapters (11 and 13) provide a range of similarly innovative projects that seek to realize the potential of collections in storage.

A different order of concern surrounds objects that were removed to other countries, particularly during the colonial era when the excision of cultural materials by foreign agencies in occupied territories could be violent. The grievances and ongoing inequalities

in access to and ownership of such material has manifested itself most clearly in calls for repatriation, restitution, and return. In Chapter 12, Abungu discusses these terms in the context of self-proclaimed 'universal museums' (ICOM 2004) and African heritage. Towards the end of the 2010s, frustration with universalist claims grew, with a watershed moment emerging in the publication of the Sarr-Savoy (2018) report commissioned by French President, Emmanuel Macron. It has had a profound impact on discourses concerning restitution from European museums to Africa and marks shift in views on repatriation. While rhetoric has intensified and become more widespread across Western scholarship, Abungu reminds us that the campaign for restitution is a long-standing one voiced by previous generations of African leaders, scholars, and activists. More importantly, he underscores the fundamental differences between Western museums' emphasis upon object preservation within museums, and the importance to some communities in Africa for objects to be allowed to return home to die and not to be confined to institutions. Where objects are situated, close to their families or to those for whom they are powerful sources of collective memory and meaning, has become one of the most pressing twenty-first century museum challenges.

Alternative Materialities: Beyond Finds

Archaeology produces, and is itself a product of, processes of documentation in the field and the museum. This section foregrounds the types of collections that are produced by archaeologists themselves and which have historically ranked low in hierarchies of museum objects: archives (Chapter 13), reproductions like casts (Chapter 14), photographs (Chapter 15), and sound (Chapter 16). Most museums possess one or several of these types of media, but they are less frequently catalogued, curated, or managed as formal parts of

institutional collections. Some, like photographs, are frequently employed in exhibitions. Others, like samples (Chapter 19) or field notes (Chapter 13), rarely are, while other media, such as sound, has rarely been given much critical consideration in museum archaeology (Chapter 16). It is necessary to consider not just how this material is utilized in exhibitionary contexts, but also how these media are ethically and professionally documented as part of institutional and disciplinary practice. This includes the materiality of these collections, each with their own problems and possibilities for preservation, research, interpretation, and engagement.

The archaeological archive is amongst the most complicated to manage given its multiplicity of forms, encompassing not just archaeological finds but all the records produced during an archaeological project, both material and those born digital. Curation here is challenging, but as Boyle (Chapter 13) demonstrates in her discussion of UK approaches, a more holistic approach is valuable not just as a means of actively encouraging archaeologists to make more use of such collections, but also for more creative engagements for the public. Better communication, she argues, is needed between producers and receivers of archives. Moreover, Boyle makes the key observation that if 'archaeology is about revealing human stories, then the human stories of those people who created the archives are just as important as the material they contain'.

These principles equally hold true when reappraising the significance of reproductions such as plaster casts, electrotypes, or synthetic resins, to name just a few of the diverse materials in which copies or replicas are produced and which populate museum collections the world over. Foster and Jones (2020) have demonstrated the ways in which archaeological replicas can themselves acquire forms of authenticity, value, and

significance through networks of social relations in which an object is entangled over time. They have highlighted how these are unique resources for engaging the public and as focuses of research. In terms of the latter, casts (and moulds from which they are made) offer numerous routes for direct archaeological analysis from iconographic to material, with historic reproductions often more detailed than monuments that have eroded in the open landscape (Payne 2019). Foster and Jones (2020) advocate 'composite biographies', which concerns the interlinked lives of historic originals and their copies. This notion of biography is central to Chapter 14 in which Reynolds-Kaye uses the reproduction of Pre-Columbian monuments to draw attention to how research on replicas of archaeological monuments reveals colonial histories of exploitation entangled within museum acquisitions and archaeological practices. As with archaeological finds, the narratives that these collections speak to are multiple and have considerable interpretive potential for public engagement. Such work is important, since, as Reynolds-Kaye underscores, the scope of reproductions in museums is vast and more diverse than just the Classical casts that have dominated scholarship. With the increasing capabilities of scanning technologies (see Chapter 27) and decreasing price of 3D printing further opportunities for replica artefacts to find a meaningful role in museum activities emerges (see Chapter 26).

Photography, Reynolds-Kaye notes, was positioned as a mutually beneficial technology with casts, a point that is taken up by Klamm in Chapter 15. Photographic collections, as Klamm surveys, are categorically different in their museum status from artefact collections since they frequently form working collections in daily museum practice. Moreover, the very processes of archaeological interpretation materially manipulate these photo-objects, the remnants of which are visible across these collections and require as much curatorial attention as the image itself. Through a series of case studies based on German classical

archaeology, Klamm explores the epistemic function of photography in archaeology, the practices evident on their surfaces, and how they are deployed within exhibitionary spaces or effaced in archival procedures such as in cataloguing and digitization efforts.

Sounds too may be collected, curated, and included as integral parts of museum strategies. Museums, Kannenberg argues in Chapter 16, are not silent spaces. Sound is key component of the construction of meaning and Kannenberg advocates a serious consideration of how visitors listen, respond to, and understand archaeology via audio. This is inclusive of reconstructions of past soundscapes, as well as capturing what archaeological practice itself sounds like. Like any other medium managed by institutions there are ethical considerations in what is museologically appropriate in any given circumstance and the modern biases that impinge on the creation and engagement with sonic resources equally require attention. To highlight these issues, Kannenberg presents the innovative concept of the Museum of Portable Sound which includes a gallery devoted to archaeology.

Fieldwork in the Museum: transformative practice

What is the value of collections themselves for contemporary archaeological research? Most museums house 'legacy collections', products of previous eras of archaeological practice that rarely conform to current standards or derive from other collecting practices, from piecemeal private acquisitions to outright looting. Assemblages from a single site or fieldwork season are often split between multiple institutions or have circulated in and out of different collections. Associated documentation may be partial or absent, rendering many collections orphaned. Historical conservation treatments of objects may affect

modern archaeological analyses. In short, museum assemblages are fragmentary and biased representations of what might be in the field. The chapters in this section discuss different strategies for how archaeological research can be positively undertaken in museums.

Engaging collections directly in conversation with ongoing fieldwork is one productive avenue (e.g. Voss 2012). In Chapter 17, Holdaway, Emmitt, and Phillipps, demonstrate the value of a combined, critical approach that assesses the historical biases in the formation of museum collections and the production of excavation reports, and innovatively combines it with new varieties of data obtained through field surveys. This sort of archaeological curation does not privilege the cataloguing of individual artefacts, as has traditionally taken place in museums, but 'preserves sets of relationships among objects as well as among other types of data'. This is made possible through digital technologies that permit diverse data sets to be integrated.

Anthropology collections also hold significant value for contemporary archaeological fieldwork, albeit with a different set of considerations for the formation of the assemblages in question, as Flexner highlights (Chapter 18). Context as process is key to archaeological research on ethnographic collection given the variety of material involved and multiple locations and temporalities. This necessarily extends to engagements with descendant or source communities as these are not resources to be exploited for archaeological self-interest as has historically been the case. Archaeologists, Flexner argues, have a role to play in assisting museums to facilitate Indigenous-led practice. The methodological shift that Holdaway et al. (Chapter 17) advocate toward curating relationships, has further implications and relevance here as many Indigenous groups do not perceive of artefacts in

isolation, but as connections between people, their environment, and spirits; artefacts can mediate those connections.

A further strategy of contemporary archaeological research with museum collections is through scientific analysis. Archaeology collections are in greater demand than ever before. Enquiries may come to curators for radiometric dating analyses, genetic studies, isotopic investigations, and petrographic preparations. Kristiansen (2014), for instance, has claimed that archaeology is experiencing a 'third science revolution', permitting the micro-archaeology of material investigations to be meshed with broader theorizing of macro-archaeological problems. Such a revolution could mean that legacy collections will have renewed relevance as primary source material given the difficulties of undertaking fieldwork in, or exported resulting finds from, many parts of the world. It is certainly clear that archaeology collections are also in greater demand than ever. Despite this, as Quinn observes in Chapter 19 'surprisingly few specific guidelines exist for the scientific analysis of museum artefacts'. His chapter fills this lacuna, addressing the advantages and risks of analysis, the various steps involved in the analysis of curated artefacts, including the choice of scientific technique, the negotiation of permissions, sampling, analysis, dissemination, and the future of data and analytical samples.

Scientific analysis, however, is contingent upon the preservation of objects. Historical interventions to stabilize or conserve artefacts, including those applied during early archaeological excavations, can significantly constrain modern analyses (Odegaard and O'Grady 2016). It is also the case that the potential and demands of modern analyses themselves are changing how material is cared for and conserved. In Chapter 20, Wills focuses on this in the context of the challenges posed by human remains, which hold a

unique status in collections. She notes that the investigative potential of this material is ever increasing with more sophisticated apparatus, which has created new obligations on museum professionals to employ preservation techniques that minimize interference and facilitate study in ethical ways. To this end, Wills has developed passive, non-interventive approaches for caring for human remains.

Exhibitionary Cultures

The exhibition of archaeological material has long been a primary means of communicating disciplinary knowledge. More recently, it has been emphasized that displays do not merely reflect knowledge, but also actively constitute it through a range of techniques and strategies (see Moser 2010). Traditions of display in this section are examined through a selection of historical, institutional, and national contexts in China, Qatar, UK, Turkey, and Ghana to illuminate trends in how archaeological museums communicate and shape popular and academic understandings of archaeology. The focus here is largely on permanent galleries rather than temporary exhibitions. The latter are often more responsive to contemporary trends and societal agendas, more experimental in their approach, and may be narrower in themes and narratives than permanent galleries.

This is particularly clear in the case of China, as explained by Wang and Hang (Chapter 21), where the frequency and importance of temporary exhibitions has increased markedly in the last decade. Their chapter provides a long-term perspective on the development of archaeological displays in China from the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949 to the present day. In this context, how archaeological resources in the country are managed at the state and local level, and how museums represent it, are intimately linked. Central

government initiatives have profoundly shaped the nature of museums and their displays, with narratives historically informed by Marxist frameworks. In China today, two primary traditions of archaeological museum management exist, one focused on 'unearthed cultural relics', the other focussed on archaeological sites themselves. The development of the latter has significantly increased in recent years and, due to the structure of heritage management in China, is a way for archaeologists themselves to have greater investment and influence on how material is presented to the public (see also Chapter 9).

While many permanent exhibitions in China remain rooted in chronological sequencing and in the presentation of artefacts for aesthetic appreciation, elsewhere a trend in exhibition strategies is the 'narrative turn', whereby museums have been reconceptualized as environments for telling stories (MacLeod et al. 2012). In archaeology, this has manifested itself in move from chronological or typological arrangements through to more emotional and sensory engagements (see Christophilopoulou 2020). Collins addresses this shift (Chapter 22), where he introduces the role of storytelling as the foundation of the Ashmolean Museum's redisplay of its ancient Near East collections. Such an approach has been equally productive in places where there has not previously been a culture of museum visiting, such as is the case of the Arabian Gulf. As Exell highlights in a discussion of the National Museum of Qatar (Chapter 23), emotive engagements with archaeological material, rather than dissemination of objectified knowledge, are vital for eliciting engagement with local audiences. This trend has seen some museums include emotional, experiential narratives, that draw on poetry and fiction, inviting audiences to envision their own stories from object and information encounters in galleries (Merriman 2004, 103).

A second trend in modern exhibition development is the consideration given to learning and public engagement impacts (Christophilopoulou and Burn 2020, 13). Why people go to museums, what they do there, and how they make meaning from these experiences are all relevant to the development and marketing of exhibitions (Falk and Dierking 2012). Consequently, considerable efforts are now put into audience testing of ideas prior to installation, as Collins (Chapter 22) discusses. In particular, he points out the additional need to consult with communities that have a greater stake in the stories being told, such as local diaspora groups and those in the country of origin. The central importance of evaluation to museum meaning making is emphasized in several other papers throughout this volume (Chapters 16, 26, and 27), a reminder that archaeologists cannot assume audiences will receive ideas in the way intended, and that dialogue across the discipline, institutions, and publics is a crucial part of museum archaeology.

Exell and Collins' chapters also make clear the multiple agencies that are involved in curation, with narratives a product of inter-disciplinary conversations around archaeology. Most recently this has extended to include digital specialists, as interactive media increasingly become integrated into exhibition design, a third key trend in the development of archaeological displays. As argued by Stobiecka (2020), this has the potential to introduce new forms of narration into archaeological galleries, although too often analogue methods of storytelling are merely transferred to the digital. Further challenges of both hardware and software longevity and sustainability mean that the lifespans of physical display and digital technologies are often out of synch (e.g. Joy and Harknett 2020, 55; Chapter 27). The latter issue is less of concern in temporary exhibitions, and it is in this context that Tarkan and Çetin (Chapter 25) present an innovative use of digital, interactive, and artistic methods to display archaeological practices and research at a field site. *The*

Curious Case of Çatalhöyük hosted at Koç University' Research Center for Anatolian Civilization, Turkey, in 2017 represents a rare exhibition solely focused on archaeological data creation and knowledge production. The show contained no original artefacts, but instead drew extensively from archaeological archives produced over 25 years of fieldwork. In so doing, the full complexity of fieldwork and the expansive nature of the material it produces could be conveyed far more clearly than when single artefacts or selected narratives are presented. Although fieldwork has historically been overlooked in archaeology galleries, the Çatalhöyük exhibition does speak to another emerging trend in exhibitionary design for archaeology; the inclusion of not just the results of archaeology, but the processes and the theoretical frameworks of archaeological interpretation, including aspects such as the histories of archaeology (Chapter 1), documentation of fieldwork, conversations with archaeologists, as well as the presencing of surrounding landscapes and local communities.

The *Curious Case of Çatalhöyük* notably used contemporary art installations, including digital media and sound (see also Chapters 16 and 27), a feature too of the Ashmolean Museum's designs for its Middle East galleries (Chapter 22), and Qatar's National Museum (Chapter 23). Artist interventions have been a common activity in archaeological galleries since the 1990s (Merriman 2004, 98–100; Mikdadi 2020). These works can form display contexts, such as at the National Museum of Scotland where pop-art pioneer Eduardo Paolozzi was commissioned to create abstract bronze figures for the *Early Peoples* gallery to incorporate prehistoric personal adornments and sculptor Andy Goldsworthy hired to create sculptures that evoked natural materials that have not survived from prehistoric Scotland (Roberts 2013). Art can also be used to provide commentary on modern heritage concerns, such as the temporary exhibition *Cultures in the Crossfire:*

Stories from Syria and Iraq hosted by the Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 2018. It displayed antiquities alongside contemporary artworks by Syrian artist Issam Kourbaj responding to the refugee crisis (for an important critique see Rafii 2019). Then there are artists that have taken archaeological themes to inform contemporary installations, like Mark Dion, whose work has paralleled archaeological processes, its categorizations, and display (Renfrew 2003). Merriman (2004, 102), however, has cautioned that contemporary art interventions in archaeological displays might be seen as abandoning interpretation in favour of aesthetics, of valourizing form over context, and has argued for an 'informed imagination' when working with artists. Others, have pointed out that using artists merely shifts the responsibility for developing counter-narratives from the museum to external practitioners, undermining an institution's resolve to address change itself (e.g. Whitehead 2009, 24).

Museum displays are also created for and used by specialist audiences. Eyifa-Dzidzienyo's chapter looks at the role of archaeological displays in university contexts, specifically at the University of Ghana's Archaeological Department, which are central to teaching and training. The displays both inform, and are informed, by school children and university students who have agency in their curation. Like many places around the world, there are challenges faced by bulk archaeological finds and lack of storage. These, however, offer opportunities to extend displayed narratives through touch and direct engagement with artefacts and is a central strategy in discovery, an exhibition design consideration also explored in Collins' chapter, and is practiced through object-based learning in the University of Ghana's museum (see also Merriman 2004, 93–95; Chapter 26). Importantly, Eyifa-Dzidzienyo highlights the significance of these displays for students across the university, not just those studying archaeology.

Expanding and Transcending the Museum: Social Justice and Digital Frontiers

This last section returns to the definition of the museum and some key developments that are transforming their purpose and identity. To do so, these chapters focus on how collections may be a resource for other forms of intervention where archaeological interpretation might not necessarily the primary goal. It looks towards the contemporary social roles of archaeological collections in the present through creative engagement and social justice initiatives, in particular beyond the walls of the museum or storage facility, including the digital realm.

In Chapter 26, Del Vesco addresses how museums are using creative initiatives to rethink museum purposes and address everything from issues of immigration, to health care and climate change. The significance of these shifts in museum purpose are at the heart of tensions over new proposals for ICOM's definition of a museum; between those that wish to retain the central importance of education, collecting, and conservation, and those that seek an expanded, more aspirational remit including social justice and health and well-being initiatives. Del Vesco argues that these interests need not be mutually exclusive, and through a discussion of a diverse range of programmes at the Muzio Egizio in Turin, Italy, highlights the role of archaeological collections and knowledge in providing inspiration for social work with immigrant, prison, and hospital communities. Many of these projects fall under what has can be termed 'health and wellbeing' agendas, which creatively use museum collections as departure points for activities beneficial to the mental wellbeing of participants, for healing and therapy (see also Kamash 2020). Yet, if these initiatives are to be more than self-serving outreach initiatives or assumed to be inherently morally

righteous activities (Fredheim 2020), structured evaluation of public value is needed to establish if the public truly are active agents or merely passive beneficiaries, and whether these can become sustainable approaches embedded within institutional missions and commitments, as Del Vesco recognizes (see also Perry 2019).

In Chapter 27, Pett extends discussion to digital content from museum websites, online collections, social media, computer gaming, and virtual reality. Museums, he outlines, have various levels of 'digital maturity' and face challenges across the digital divide. Nevertheless, all institutions when embarking on the production of any digital project require strong institutional foundations, clear collections documentation, and critical thought as to the purposes and long-term resourcing if quality, impactful, and meaningful experiences for the public are to be assured. This resonates with Perry's (2019) observation that digital technology can play an important role in facilitating encounters with archaeology, but that this requires conscious design and pedagogical choices that are not inherent within the technology itself. And this should incorporate consideration for different user communities, from those who need to be enabled (Chapter 7) or Indigenous communities (Chapters 3, 6, and 18).

Digital initiatives are often a means of reaching outwards, but rarely do projects allow the public to co-operate with museums more directly in how collections are understood, documented, and managed. Yet, as Rohiola and Kuitunen remind us in Chapter 28, the public have always had a role in archaeological research from finds brought into museums by citizens in the nineteenth century, through to very active hobbyist metal detecting groups in more recent decades. Hobbyists are the focus of Rohiola and Kuitunen's chapter where they introduce the digital platform, FindSampo, developed in Sweden to not only

make accessible archaeological finds, but also develop opportunities for the public to be involved more directly with collections. These sorts of Citizen Science approaches seek to democratize the management of archaeological collections, encouraging more co-operative approaches between different publics and archaeologists, highlighting the shift in curatorial strategies to attending to relationships between people rather than just things through user-centred design. Digital platforms, as Rohiola and Kuitunen outline, also have the potential for Linked Open Data, thereby inter-relating multiple archaeological collections transnationally (see also Chapter 17).

Conclusion

The breadth of themes, approaches, stakeholders, and contemporary issues within which archaeological collections and their institutional homes are implicated warrants sustained critical engagement from the discipline of archaeology. The history and ongoing treatment of collections shapes not just the possibilities for communication or engagement, but also research questions, methodologies, ethics, and interpretations. Across the volume are shared concerns for contemporary practice, such as the idea that collections care is not simply a technical management term, but one that is attentive to the range of emotions and affects that working with assemblages entails. This highlights the range of ways of knowing the past and understanding objects, but also of the potential uses to which the past can creatively be put. It demands a sharing of disciplinary authority and seeking partnerships with relevant communities in the process of interpretation and representation, as well as the recognition of the broader agencies that were part of archaeological and collections production often under colonial conditions. Such engagements involve a wide range of materials not simply archaeological finds, from the monumental to the

microscopic. This diversity of activity challenges archaeology as a discipline and the museum as a sector to redefine critically what constitutes best practice and who that serves, questions that demand ongoing reflection and evaluation. Ultimately, archaeology is not necessarily always the finite resource it has been characterized to be. There continues to be a profusion of material produced by fieldwork, reproductive technologies, creative re-interpretations, shifts in interpretative positions, and the inclusion of new voices. Museum archaeology thus deserves a far more central place within archaeological theory, practice, and training in future.

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