

Session title: REPRESENTATION, IMAGE AND THE MATERIALITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Organizers: Sheila Kohring, University of Cambridge, UK
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Time: Thursday morning

Room:

Session abstract:

Focus on the body and representation has been a long-standing archaeological interest and has recently been revived and reinvented within archaeological discourse (i.e., Knowledge, Belief and the Body EAA session 2006; see Hamilakis, Pluciennik and Tarlow 2002). Similarly, there has been a strong response to Pfaffenberger's (1992) call for the reintroduction of technological knowledge into anthropological (and vis-à-vis archaeological) research (i.e. Social Dimensions of Technology EAA session 2007; see Dobres 2000). The two themes have much in common: corporeality and materiality, the performative nature of constructing self and society, and stasis and change in social reproduction through tradition and systems of knowing.

Mauss (1979) recognised very early the importance of *techniques du corps*, or the embedded and corporeal nature of technologies and their enactment, and C.S. Smith (1981) has further linked the role of artist and technician by comparing material and representational acts. Archaeologists are uniquely situated to build upon these observations - through *chaîne opératoire*, materiality and materialization studies – and contextualize them in broader societal structures. Representation of the body is thus linked to techniques of production just as much as to internal knowledge of self. Conkey's (1995) correlation between pigment, its application and the style of Upper Palaeolithic cave art provides one such example.

This session explores how the materiality of material culture and their associated social technologies coalesce with social knowledge in the creation of bodily representation. Topics of interest include how representation of the human body changes across different material culture (i.e. clay, bone, stone, metal), how the technologies and materiality of particular media inform and construct bodily representation through technique, and how technologies interlink to create new traditions and perceptions of the body. Papers are invited from various geographical areas and from different material culture perspectives. The unifying theme, however, is the focus on the relationship between technological systems, knowledge systems of the body and the materiality of the raw material.

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Paper abstracts:

STONE AND CLAY, WHAT? NO METAL? CREATING BODILY CONCEPTIONS THROUGH MATERIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

Sheila Kohring, University of Cambridge, UK

Why is the human body so diverse in representation? Are bodies socially conceptualised or do they have a representational engagement, where the representation is influenced by the physical properties of the raw material and the associated material technologies? Raw materials and creators are transformed through technological engagement, but both sides – subject and object – carry constraining characteristics and malleable characteristics. By looking specifically at how the body and human representations are created in different media, we can begin to understand the constraining and malleability of both material and subject. In this vein, this paper looks at the general relationship between images in rock and images in clay spanning from the Neolithic into the Late Bronze Age in the Iberian Peninsula. Technological innovation and transition is highlighted, as variability within and between different media, the role of hybridity, and the creation of ‘traditions’ are explored in reference to changing representation and conception of the body.

PRODUCTION AND PERCEPTION: CHANGING VIEWS AND BODILY REPRESENTATION IN NEOLITHIC AND COPPER AGE FIGURINES

Katherine Cooper, University of Cambridge, UK

Interpretations of anthropomorphic figurines are often linked to the creation of self, identity and the body. Materials, contexts and scales of analysis are often poorly considered, while having the potential to play a significant role in understanding change and opening up the avenue to perception-based approaches rather than simply focusing on the symbolic aspects of figurine production. In this paper, I explore how peoples’ production and perception of anthropomorphic figurines changed between the Neolithic and Copper Age in Italy due to the introduction and manipulation of different and new material.

TOGETHER WE STAND – DIVIDED WE FALL: FRAGMENTATION OF NEOLITHIC FIGURINES FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Goce Naumov, Institute for History of Art and Archaeology, University of Skopje, FYROM

The figurines are one of the most exciting topics of research in Neolithic archaeology. Different types of miniatures belong to a variety of corporeal imagery and seek diverse approaches of explanation, including their context, petrography, gestures, gender, identity and fragmentation. Of great importance is their last category: fragmentation. Figurines were carefully modelled in parts, and in certain context they were intentionally broken. Production techniques were often employed in order to facilitate deliberate fragmentation at a later time, such as independent modelling prior to joining of certain body parts (such as the buttocks) or joining with the usage of small sticks. This process of modelling for deliberate fragmentation, gave special attention and treatment to the head, which could then be separately attached to the torso. Of the numerous Neolithic Macedonian figurines utilising these techniques their fragmented counterparts weren't often found in the vicinity of the torso. We may argue that figurines were potent media for transposing the ideas related to individuals, the change of their status and of identity and techniques of corporeal representation and fragmentation materialised specific symbolic acts related to the essential practices of the social body.

MATERIALS, BODIES AND BELIEFS IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

Jessica Hughes, University of Cambridge, UK

Modern discussions of classical sculptures normally privilege issues of form, style and iconography over any consideration of the materials from which they were made. But even a casual glance at ancient literary texts shows that, for ancient viewers, sculptural material was frequently 'the' most significant quality of a representation. This paper starts by introducing the basic concept that in classical antiquity the materials of sculpture were used to infuse human bodies with value and meaning. I explore this issue further through a study of the votive body parts that were dedicated from the seventh century onwards in Italy and later in France. I explore what the change from bronze to terracotta in Italian sanctuaries can tell us about both shifting notions of both the human body and the creation of sacred space. Then I turn to Roman Gaul, to the sanctuaries in Burgundy and the Auvergne where waterlogged conditions preserve a rich horizon of imagery in wood, bronze and stone. This comparison, which tracks material differences in formally similar images over time and space, indicates the value of materials as a way into reconstructing changes in beliefs of the human body in past societies.

DIMENSIONS OF TECHNOLOGY, DIMENSIONS OF THE BODY: A SOCIO-TECHNICAL APPROACH TO PAVLOVIAN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BODY

Rebecca Farbstein, University of Cambridge, UK

Pavlovian portable art, dating to c. 28-24,000 uncal BP and found predominantly in the Moravian region of the modern Czech Republic, includes many of the earliest representations of both animals and humans. Archaeologists have long discussed the iconography and style of these figurines, placing much importance on the shape and configuration of the female bodies in particular. In this paper, an alternative approach will be adopted, which focuses on material choices and modification sequences as two important underlying impetuses for social conventions in representation. The expression of “stylistic” features of representation like dimensionality, naturalism and abstraction will be discussed with reference to the technological sequences that created these figurines. This technological study will reveal how production choices influenced, and reflect, the conception and production of both human and animal bodies in the Pavlovian.

PLAYING WITH CLAY: POTS AS BODILY REPRESENTATION IN MALLEITEN NEAR BAD FISCHAU, AUSTRIA

Sandy Buddens, University of Southampton, UK

As archaeologists our engagement with objects has recently been reawakened by Ingold's 2007 challenge to resituate an understanding of materials, as both fluid and recursive, within the notion of materiality. Mauss (1935) idea of the '*techniques du corps*' has also recently regained common currency within archaeological discourse (Schlanger 2006). Linking these two perspectives with a profound understanding of the physical enactment of procedural knowledge, it becomes possible to explore how the manipulation of materials may be argued to form bodily representations - even where no iconographic imagery exists. In this paper I explore the very fluid nature of a single material, clay. During the Early Iron Age at Malleiten near Bad Fischau, Austria clay was used to create two contrasting pottery forms: Kalenderberg cups, bowls and firedogs and large storage / funerary vessels. These two forms of ceramic see the malleable physical properties (or qualities, c.f. Ingold 2007: 13) of clay drawn out in strikingly different ways. These contrasting performances and their ensuing bodily representations (pots) are interpreted through a profound understanding of the material properties of clay, the nature of procedural knowledge as skilled performance, and analogical reference of each ceramic repertoire to the material categories of textiles and metal.

REPRESENTING THE NEOLITHIC BODY IN CLAY: IMAGE AND TECHNIQUE IN POTTERY-BASED REPRESENTATION

Olga Gómez Pérez, University of Valencia, Spain

Potters choose a “way-of-doing” among several possibilities within their technological repertoire. When representing images on pottery they have an idea, a conception of the human body, which is internal to a community - with symbolic, social and ideological specific connotations. This study explores different bodily representation techniques, their association with other decorative motifs and how these visible characteristics link to technical decisions (i.e. paste, quality) and use (i.e. context). These are then, more generally, compared to contemporary

representations in other media, in order to explore the idea of stylistic convention in material genres. I propose different kinds of bodily representation were being played with during the Neolithic period in Valencia, Spain with the focus on pottery, but still referencing rock art.

REPRODUCING BODIES AND IDENTITIES THROUGH ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION: A ROCK ART ANALYSIS

Alice Clough, University of Cambridge, UK

The concept of art is often disassociated from technical engagement, as the emphasis is often on the symbolic, specialised or aesthetic nature of “Art” as a Western construct. It is more useful for archaeologists to link it directly to material culture; people interact with it in contextually specific, knowledgeable and practical ways. In doing so, there is an element of “something for everyone” in social representation – the interactive nature reproduces both ideas of the representation and techniques of production in particular and socially mandated ways. Bodily images are formed, then, through creator’s interpretations of existing images of body and the techniques of production. These link directly to narrative and myths beyond the image and reinforce bodily beliefs. As an example, this paper explores techniques and representations in Later Prehistoric Scandinavian-Russian rock art, giving special emphasis to pecking and carving traditions, but referencing the role of painting in the construction of same/different styles and traditions.

CASTING ONESELF, PORTRAYING THE OTHER: THE MATERIALITY OF IMAGES IN EARLY ART

Lila Janik, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, UK

Different technologies and innovations in material use allow humans to express different concepts and ideas. One way of considering this is in the creation of “portraits” of oneself and of others. Portraiture has been used to discuss a wide array of imagery, including both Palaeolithic figurines to Late Neolithic rock art. The importance of the face is central to these discussions, as it is often the key to cognitive recognition of individuals. The visually distorted faces of Upper Palaeolithic figurines have been discussed by McDermott as self-portraiture using water reflection, while the realistic human representations in Northern Russian Neolithic rock art are not viewed as images of self, as they are done in profile. However, the materiality of technique and the materialisation of the concept of self, as realised through auto-portraiture, could only be achieved with particular technological developments and materiality. While, portraits of others were always present, found in a variety of media and often were made specifically for public display, sculpture often facilitated self-portraiture. The lack of faces in some sculpture suggests recognition was not the primary function, thus these images were created for self-consumption rather than public display.