

## Ex-situ (Paris, 20–21 Oct 17)

Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, Oct 20–21, 2017

Deadline: Apr 15, 2017

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Ex-situ : bringing archaeology to life in museums and exhibitions

Conference – 20 -21 October 2017

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The development of archaeology as a discipline based on fieldwork was accompanied by a new vision of the past in all its material diversity. Since the Renaissance, ancient objects that could be found in princely galleries and antiquarian cabinets represented an idealized past through elements that had mainly been handed down from generation to generation. Generally devoid of specific provenance, they provided aesthetic norms and were interpreted with the aid of classical texts. The discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum revealed the power of the site itself and fuelled the desire to discover a more tangible antiquity. Frozen in time, they provided elements relevant to all aspects of daily life, and even the bodies of those who died were materialized thanks to casts made by Fiorelli (1863).

The ambition to recreate this past ex situ, far from the original sites for a curious cosmopolitan audience, was encouraged by this possibility of recovering the past in all its diverse materiality as well as by a new taste for commercial public spectacle. But the transposition and translation of site materials and field results presented significant challenges. Exhibitions and museums, often criticized for the manner in which they detach objects from an original context, and the deadening effect that this can produce found a resource in archaeology to help overcome or make up for the loss of meaning incurred by displacement. A wide range of strategies were developed to activate the visitor's imagination and to evoke the lost worlds related to the collections extracted from the ground.

The multitude of presentations provided by museums and temporary exhibitions illustrate the poetics and politics involved in imagining the past through the lens of archaeological discoveries. They combine the presence of more or less heavily restored and manipulated objects with diverse kinds of scenic strategies, that seek to amplify the visitor's experience of the traces provided by fieldwork. A similar invitation to travel back in time can be found in the development of archaeological novel. A growing desire for monumentality and a strong policy of archaeological expansion led to the extraction of materials at an ever larger scale with groups of sculptures and even major architectural ensembles making their way into museums.

However over the course of the Twentieth century, one observes a steady decline in such monu-

mental ensembles and decors and the establishment of a form of reverence for the "authentic" fragment. But another trend also attempted to bring the science of archaeological work into the museum with a more specifically pedagogical approach. The desire for the spectacular also continued to flourish and can be found again in recent 360° digital creations that seek to immerse the visitor in antique landscapes and recreated monuments. The principal of the panorama, so fashionable in the Nineteenth century has indeed been experiencing something of a comeback (Yadegar Asisi Panoramas : Rom 312 (2006) and Pergamon (2011) ; sites éternels (2016) with the use of large scale photography (Pompei exhibition, Montréal 2016).

Several themes can potentially be dealt with in this examination of archaeology ex situ :

- the material history of presentations that seek to evoke and archaeological context and their public reception.
- the presence of the human body (mannequins, mummies, or indeed performances) and the specific ethical problems that they increasingly raise.
- contemporary efforts to produce immersive environments with digital media but also pedagogical tools such as the use of maps, models etc.

Abstracts of no more 3000 characters, with a one page C.V. should be sent to [exsitu.antiquities@gmail.com](mailto:exsitu.antiquities@gmail.com) before the 15th of April, 2017.

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Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/14785>>.