

Editorial

Archaeology and Art in War Zones: Methods, Media, Technology, and Aesthetics

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Convergence between the work of the historian or archaeologist and that of writers or artists was a given for a long time. The craft of the former demanded as much factual reporting and meticulous observation as good writing or drawing skills and imagination—all in the service of a truthful rendering or reconstruction of reality. Since the late 20th century, the academic disciplines have become more self-conscious about that claim. Concomitantly, in what Dieter Roelstraete has called the “historiographic turn,” writers and artists started to deploy and investigate the tensions between seemingly objective methods and media (of documentation and classification) and various parameters such as subjective decision or technology. As recent exhibitions, such as *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (2008) or *The Way of the Shovel: Art as Archaeology* (2013), have made clear, more than just questioning the claim to objectivity, such artistic practices simultaneously critique and celebrate the creative framework of any archive and its custodians. Moreover, they introduce a new concern with and attraction to materiality after decades of the prevalence of language in creating meaning.

How does such blending of academic disciplines and art play out in the face of the actual destruction of an archive? Can art assume the role of archaeology in such a situation and vice versa? Where does critique remain when the primary concern is rescue? What, in the case of total loss, can documentation do other than virtual preservation? Where, in this case, is the place of materiality? When historical work is equivalent to political activism, how does it impact aesthetics, the choice of medium and of technology?

The demolition of archaeological heritage by the so-called Islamic State (IS) has sparked worldwide outrage and a heated, if ultimately helpless debate about how to confront such iconoclasm. How have archaeologists and artists re-acted in this context? Or rather: What kind of archaeological and artistic work has been done, by professionals and non-professionals alike?

We are looking for articles that critically engage with the work of and visual media used by archaeologists, historians, activists and artists (or all of the above) that respond to the current destruction and looting of cultural heritage by war and fundamentalists. While focus is on the Near and Middle East, papers dealing with similar issues in other areas of the world are also welcome.



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