



Archaeological Review from Cambridge

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VOLUME 37.2 (NOVEMBER 2022): AESTHETICS, SENSORY SKILLS, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Call for Papers

Theme Editors: Polina Kapsali and Rachel Phillips

In the last two decades, growing interest in studying human-object interaction has rekindled attempts to consider the usefulness of the concept of aesthetics in archaeology. Traditionally framed within art-historical and philosophical discourse, the concept has also been used in archaeology as a means to explore past experiences, by shedding light on the capacity of the material world to train the senses and shape human perception. Following on from earlier ARC volumes, such as ‘Aesthetics and Style’ (1985) and ‘The Archaeology of Perception and the Senses’ (1998), this issue aims to provoke fresh perspectives and generate new ways of looking at things, by shifting the focus from the formal qualities of objects to the ways that objects can help people establish relations and norms.

We consider ‘aesthetics’ as a concept capturing the socially informed processes of perceiving and evaluating the properties of the physical world (including the natural environment, the human body, and artefacts). We view these processes as dependent on the ways sensory skills are trained in societies through people’s interaction with the physical world: as part of their socialisation, people learn to establish associations, knitting together objects, their properties, other people, and values. These associations facilitate social categorisations, routines, and relations. But how can we detect these processes archaeologically?

This volume aims to explore the relationship between aesthetics, sensory skills, and social praxis in past societies and to investigate how social norms are shaped through engagement with the material world. We welcome a wide range of approaches involving theoretical and methodological propositions, and case studies employing aesthetics and sensory skills as analytical tools. Possible questions to be explored may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Is aesthetics a useful term for archaeological analysis? Does this concept help or hinder our efforts to explore and understand human-object interactions?
- How can we explore sensory skills through the study of archaeological remains? How does this exploration contribute to our understanding of the past?
- How did aesthetic perception and sensory skills affect social praxis in past societies, for example, in processes of collective identification, social differentiation, and resistance?
- What is the role of material, technology, or medium (pottery, metal vessels, stone artefacts etc.) in shaping aesthetics?
- Is there an aesthetic dimension to archaeological practice and excavation, both past and present?

Papers of no more than 4000 words should be submitted to aestheticsandarchaeology@gmail.com before 28 February 2022 for publication in November 2022. Potential contributors are encouraged to register interest by submitting an abstract of up to 250 words to the email above or by contacting the editors directly to discuss their ideas before 5 November 2021. More information about the Archaeological Review from Cambridge may be found online at <http://arc.soc.srcf.net/contribute.html>. Information about submission guidelines, notes for Contributors and Style Guide may be found online at https://arc.soc.srcf.net/ARC_notesForContributors.pdf.