Experimental Archaeology: Making, Understanding, Story-telling

Proceedings of a Workshop in Experimental Archaeology

Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens with UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture, Dublin

Athens 14th – 15th October 2017

Edited by

Christina Souyoudzoglou-Haywood and Aidan O’Sullivan

ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Contributors</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Experimental Archaeology: Making, Understanding, Storytelling?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aidan O’Sullivan and Christina Souyoudzoglou-Haywood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental archaeological reconstructions and the investigation of houses from the past</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aidan O’Sullivan and Brendan O’Neill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting prehistoric bronze tools and weapons: experimental and experiential perspectives</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Molloy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Cutting edge technology’: new evidence from the experimental simulation and use of Late Bronze Age woodworking cutting tools. The saw as ‘case study’</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Εleni Maragoudaki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimenting on Mycenaean goldworking techniques: the case of the granulated cone</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi, Nikola Papadimitriou, Akis Goumas, Anna Philippa-Touchais, Romain Prévalet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking through our hands: making and understanding Minoan female anthropomorphic figurines from the peak sanctuary of Prinias, Crete</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Morris, Brendan O’Neill and Alan Peatfield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstructing a Bronze Age Kiln from Priniatikos Pyrgos, Crete</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo Day and Maggie Kobik</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where have all the early medieval clay moulds gone? An experimental archaeological investigation of bi-valve clay moulds in Ireland, AD 400-1100</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendan O’Neill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreating Neolithic textiles: an exercise on woven patterns</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalliope Sarri and Ulrikka Mokdad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental archaeology and the investigation of the methods, materials and techniques of fresco wall-paintings</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonis Vlavogilakis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

A. O’Sullivan and C. Souyoudzoglou-Haywood: Introduction Defining Experimental Archaeology:
Making, Understanding, Storytelling?
Figure 1. Participants observing one of the demonstrations ................................................................. 3
Figure 2. Ulrikka Mokdad demonstrating the weaving of Neolithic patterns, with Kalliopi Sarri ....................... 3
Figure 3. Epaminontas Venieris explaining the manufacture of Cycladic marble figurines, with Brendan O’Neill experimenting .... 3
Figure 4. Akis Goumas creating gold granules for the decoration of the Mycenaean bead ........................................ 3

A. O’Sullivan and B. O’Neill: Experimental archaeological reconstructions and
the investigation of houses from the past
Figure 1. Artist’s reconstruction painting of a hypothetical early medieval rath, with its enclosure defences, entrance, interior structures and activities. The houses are shown as straight-sided walls with a conical roof, the typical interpretation of the archaeological evidence, which is challenged in this paper ........................................ 7
Figure 2. The early medieval rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, a site plan showing its Phase 6A features, radiocarbon dated to the late seventh to eighth century AD. A distinctive, paved entranceway, flanked by low walls, is at the east side. There are two figure-of-eight dwellings —each of two roundhouses— with doorways, stone-lined hearths and beds, and a further roundhouse (Structure Epsilon, reconstructed at CEAMC) is located to the south. A rubbish heap or midden is at the northeast, and paved pathways guide movement around the enclosure ........................................................................... 8
Figure 3. Building the early medieval roundhouse at UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC) in June 2015. The inner wall is being pulled in to form a dome, and the outer wall, used to retain insulation material, serves as a useful ladder during the construction ........................................................................................................... 9
Figure 4. The completed early medieval roundhouse at UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC), thatched with heather, in September 2016. The house is settling in form, though the roof thatch will flatten further and change colour ............................................................................................................................... 9
Figure 5. The early medieval roundhouse at UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC), under snow in the winter of 2018. Investigations of the house in terms of heat, smoke, light and other environmental factors have provided insights into living conditions in early medieval houses ....................................................................................................................... 10
Figure 6. The interior of the early medieval roundhouse at UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC), showing central hearth, bedding area against north wall, and a range of furniture and domestic objects —pots, wooden buckets, a dash churn, a trough, a cooking pot and tripod, candles— used within the building. Much of this was to be destroyed in the fire of 2019 ....................................................................................................................... 11
Figure 7. A view of the destroyed early medieval roundhouse at UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC), burnt in an arson attack in May 2019. The site provides an opportunity to investigate the survival of burnt structures in the archaeological record ........................................................................................................................................ 12

B. Molloy: Crafting prehistoric bronze tools and weapons: experimental and experiential perspectives
Figure 1. Forged bevelled edge of later Bronze Age sword from Ireland ....................................................... 18
Figure 2. Replica hammer and anvil based on the Bishopsland Hoard from Ireland. Note the wear at the edges of the working-face on the anvil and the degradation of the line demarcating the inner edge (relative to the user) of the hammer face .................................................................................................................................................. 19
Figure 3. Forging the edge of a bronze sword using a replica hammer and anvil based on the Bishopsland hoard in Dublin ...... 20
Figure 4. Replica sword following initial round of hammering the complete article and then cut into 10 sample sections prior to further work ........................................................................................................................................ 20
Figure 5. Section of blade with one edge bent off the correct, centrally aligned, line of the blade (left edge) and with excessively drawn out edge (right edge) ........................................................................................................................................... 21
Figure 6. Annealing a section of sword blade in a charcoal charge with air pumped in via a double-bellows .......... 21
Table 1. Details of treatment of sample sections of bronze sword test piece including hammering phase, annealing duration and temperatures reached (core and edge differentiated where appropriate), if quenched in water ................................................................................................................................. 22

E. Maragoudaki: ‘Cutting edge technology’: new evidence from experimental simulation
and use of Late Bronze Age woodworking cutting tools. The saw as ‘case study’
Figure 1. The saw from Prosymna, Argolid ........................................................................................................ 28
Figure 2. The saw from Androniani region, Central Euboea ............................................................................ 28
Figure 3. The Prosymna saw tooth geometry: sharpness angle (a), hook angle (b), tooth tip line (cc’) ........................................ 29
Figure 4a. The teeth density of the Androniani saw ........................................................................................................ 29
Figure 4b. The Androniani saw teeth geometry ......................................................................................................... 29
Figure 4c. The setting of the Androniani saw teeth printed on a slab of plasticine (a), amount of set (b), and the bevel (fleam) of the saw teeth cutting edge (c) ........................................................................................................................................ 29
Figure 4d. Traces of filing preserved on some of the teeth of Androniani saw (a) the teeth are one side bevelled (left or right) according to setting (b) ........................................................................................................ 30
E. Konstantinidis-Syvridi et al.: Experimenting on Mycenaean goldworking techniques: the case of the granulated cone

Figure 5. Conical beads (rochus shell) from the cemetery of Deiras, Argos, 15th century BC

Figure 6. The conical bead from Argos: a) granules joined by fine 'necks', b) granule 'flooded' in the binding material, c) molten granule

Figure 7. The disc-shaped foil is embossed with wooden punches in successive cavities of increasing depth

Figure 8. Shaping the gold cone: a) the positive mould, b) pressing the cone with the mould into a cavity, c) chasing the spiral groove from the exterior

Figure 9. Production of granules: a) the gold sheet is cut into minute pieces of standard size, b) each piece is heated with the help of a blowpipe, c) when heated close to its melting point, the gold fragment becomes a sphere

Figure 10. Adding the granules on the body: a) preparation of a mixture of copper-salts, a resin (mastic) and water, b) the mixture is applied to the groove, c) granules are placed in the groove after they have been dipped in the mixture

Figure 11. Filing (sharpening) the teeth of reconstructed saw blades: a) cross-cutting and (b) rip-cutting

Figure 12. The saw from Akrotiri

Figure 13. Filing (sharpening) the teeth of reconstructed saw blades: a) cross-cutting and (b) rip-cutting

Figure 14. Using the small reconstructed saw to cross-cut the head of the wooden pegs of the hull fraction

Figure 15. Quality of surface of the rip-sawn board: (a) electrical band saw, and (b) reconstructed bronze saw

Figure 16. Sawing a plank along the grain with a reconstructed saw (a), and using a wedge to keep the saw-cut open (b)

Figure 17. The body posture of an Egyptian craftsman while sawing (a), and the wide-legged stance of the modern operator, while using the reconstructed saw (b)

Figure 18. The disc-shaped foil is embossed with wooden punches in successive cavities of increasing depth

Figure 19. The body posture of an Egyptian craftsman while sawing (a), and the wide-legged stance of the modern operator, while using the reconstructed saw (b)

Figure 20. Using the small reconstructed saw to cross-cut the head of the wooden pegs of the hull fraction
B. O’Neill: Where have all the early medieval clay moulds gone? An experimental archaeological investigation of bi-valve clay moulds in Ireland, AD 400-1100

K. Sarri and U. Mokdad: Recreating Neolithic textiles: an exercise on woven patterns

A. Vlavogilakis: Experimental archaeology and the investigation of the methods, materials and techniques of fresco wall-paintings
The Contributors

Jo Day is Lecturer in Greek Archaeology and Curator of the Classical Museum in University College Dublin. She is responsible for publishing the Early Minoan pottery from the site of Priniatikos Pyrgos in eastern Crete, and is especially interested in Bronze Age ceramic technology. Other research interests include sensory archaeology and the archaeology of food.
Contact: joanna.day@ucd.ie

Akis Goumas is a goldsmith and researcher of ancient technologies. He has studied jewellery and gemology, as well as economics. He started working as an artist in 1986, and in 1996, he started teaching creative jewellery in artistic and technical schools. Since 2000 he has been working with archaeologists for the study and reconstruction of ancient crafting techniques. His collaboration with Nikolas Papadimitriou and Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi on Mycenaean gold jewellery is long standing. Currently he is also collaborating with the Benaki Museum for a major exhibition on Hellenistic jewellery, and with the University of Heidelberg for the study of Minoan-Mycenaean seal engraving techniques.
Contact: akisgoumas@gmail.com

Maggie Kobik is a commercial and experimental archaeologist currently working in Dublin. She earned her master’s degree in archaeology from University College Dublin in 2017 and her bachelor’s degree from Washington College (Maryland) in 2011. Her research interests include ceramic production, metalworking, and fishing technology.
Contact: margaret.kobik@ucdconnect.ie

Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi is Curator at the Department of Collections of Prehistoric, Egyptian, Cypriot and Near Eastern Antiquities at the National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Her research focuses on the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, with particular interest in Mycenaean jewellery and dress. Since 2011 she has been participating in a project on the experimental reconstruction and terminology of ancient jewellery techniques with Nikolas Papadimitriou and Akis Goumas.
Contact: ekonstant09@gmail.com

Eleni Maragoudaki holds a Diploma in History, Archaeology and History of Art (University of Athens), a D.E.A. in Prehistoric Archaeology (University of Sorbonne, Paris I) and a PhD in experimental archaeology entitled ‘Mycenaean woodworking tools used in shipbuilding’ (University of Athens and The National Center for Scientific Research ‘Demokritos’). She is working since 1999 in diverse Ephorates of Antiquities as field archaeologist and supervisor of monuments’ restoration. She lives in Athens and her interests are in the area of ancient technology, prehistoric navigation and experimental archaeology.
Contact: emaragoudaki@yahoo.com

Ulrika Mokdad is a weaver and art historian, who received her MA on a thesis on Coptic textiles from the University of Copenhagen, where she currently works as a research assistant at the Centre for Textile Research, Saxo-Institute, Faculty of Humanities. She has exhibited her personal tapestry artworks in collective exhibitions worldwide. Since 2013, she participates in several projects on experimental archaeology mainly dealing with the reconstruction of the ancient textile techniques and the recreation of prehistoric and ancient textiles.
Contact: umokdad@gmail.com

Barry Molloy is Associate Professor in prehistoric European and Mediterranean archaeology at the UCD School of Archaeology, University College Dublin. With a long-standing interest in Bronze Age weaponry and warfare, he has analysed material in museums across Europe. The projects range from innovating new methods in metalwork wear analysis to conducting technological studies using archaeometric methods. A core component to this research has been the use of accurate replica weapons manufactured by specialist smiths and Molloy himself. Drawing on these experimental data to aid interpretation, he has published widely on the biography and lifecycles of prehistoric metalwork and the topic of prehistoric conflict and violence.
Contact: barry.molloy@ucd.ie

Christine Morris is Andrew A. David Associate Professor in Greek Archaeology and History in the Department of Classics, Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses on the Aegean Bronze Age, with particular interests in ceramics; art and religion (goddesses, healing/medicine); gender in archaeology; historiography and reception of Minoan Crete; digital technologies in archaeology. She is a collaborator on the international network Unlocking Sacred Landscapes (http://www.ucy.ac.cy/unsala/).
Contact: cmorris@tcd.ie

Brendan O’Neill is Assistant Professor of Archaeology at University College Dublin. He is also a programme...
coordinator for UCD MSc in Experimental Archaeology and the Deputy Director of the Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC) in UCD. Brendan’s research is focused on early medieval Ireland, the application of experimental archaeology approaches and material culture. Contact: brendan.oneill@ucd.ie

Aidan O’Sullivan is a Professor of Archaeology at University College Dublin, Ireland. He is Director of the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture and established the School of Archaeology’s MSc in Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture in 2016. His research interests focus on early medieval Ireland, AD 400–1100, in its northwest European context; Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture studies; and Wetland Archaeology and Environments globally. He is the author and co-author of 13 books, including Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400-1100. The evidence from archaeological excavations (Royal Irish Academy, 2013) and co-edited The Oxford Handbook of Wetland Archaeology (Oxford University Press, 2012). Contact: Aidan.O’Sullivan@ucd.ie

Nikolas Papadimitriou is a lecturer at the Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Heidelberg. His research focuses mainly on four areas: Mycenaean death practices, Aegean technology and craftsmanship, the archaeology of Athens and Attica, and Mediterranean interconnections in the Bronze Age. He has been working with Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi and Akis Goumas on Mycenaean gold technology since 2011, publishing a number of papers and organizing experimental workshops in Greece and abroad. Contact: nikolaos.papadimitriou@zaw.uni-heidelberg.de

Alan Peatfield teaches archaeology in University College Dublin. His research is in the field of Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology, especially Minoan religion and combat archaeology. His long term focus has been on Minoan peak sanctuaries, especially arising from his own excavation of the Atsipadhes peak sanctuary, and currently the East Cretan Peak Sanctuary Project, with Christine Morris and Brendan O’Neill. Prior to moving to Ireland, Alan was Knossos Curator for the British School at Athens (1984-1990). Contact: Alan.Peatfield@ucd.ie

Anna Philippa-Touchais, archaeologist, is a Research Fellow of the French School at Athens and Member of the scientific team of the Aegean Protohistory (UMR 7041) of Paris I Sorbonne/CNRS University. She has participated in several research programs, among them the excavation of the Middle Helladic settlement in Aspis, Argos with G. Touchais, and is currently working on the re-evaluation and final publication of the prehistoric tumuli at Vrana, Marathon (Archaeological Society at Athens) and the finds of the Mycenaean cemetery at Deiras, Argos (French School at Athens). Contact: anna.touchais@gmail.com

Romain Prévalez, archaeologist, is working on revitalizing and promoting ancient jewellery and precious crafts as an expert and a scholar at CNRS in Paris. He is also a specialist of cultural and digital marketing, and has created CulturMoov, a startup in cultural tourism. Romain also teaches at Sorbonne Université and in business schools. Contact: romainprevalez@hotmail.fr

Kalliope Sarri is a prehistorian specialized in the Aegean cultures, mainly of the Greek Mainland with a particular interest in landscape archaeology, architecture, burial customs and specialization in pottery and textile production. She participates in international and interdisciplinary research projects in Greece that address these issues. Her publications until now mainly concern Middle Bronze Age ceramics and the distribution of prehistoric pottery in central Greek sites and landscapes. Over the last years, she has focused on the study of prehistoric textiles and deals with experimental and experiential archaeology. Contact: kalliope.sarri@gmail.com

Christina Souyoudzoglou-Haywood is Director of the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens (IIHSA) and Adjunct Lecturer at the School of Classics, University College Dublin. Her main research area is the Late Bronze Age of Greece, particularly the western periphery of the Mycenaean world, focusing on the Ionian island of Kefalonia, where she has been conducting a diachronic fieldwalking survey since 2003. For many years Curator of the Classical Museum, UCD, she has published on its history and contents as well as on Greek and Cypriot antiquities in other Irish museum and university collections. Contact: christina.haywood@ucd.ie

Antonis Vlavogilakis was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. His background in art includes a Bachelor degree in Fine Art, a Master in Fine Art and a Master in Art and Education. Currently he is in the final stages of a PhD in experimental archaeology at the University of the Aegean involving the experimental recreation of a wall painting from the Tomb of Persephone (Vergina, mid-4th Century BC). His research interests include variations of fresco-type painting techniques, lime mortar technology, organic pigment making, and art related equipment. A member of Exarc, he has published papers on experimental archaeology and has presented his research in conferences and workshops. Lives and works in Greece. Contact: antonisvlavogilakis@gmail.com
Introduction
Defining Experimental Archaeology:
Making, Understanding, Storytelling?

Aidan O’Sullivan and Christina Souyoudzoglou-Haywood

Experimental archaeology can be defined as the reconstruction of past buildings, technologies, things, and environmental contexts, based on archaeological evidence, and their use, testing, recording, and experience. Through these we are better able to understand the character and role of materiality and material culture in peoples’ lives. However, it has not always been defined thus, and what people have thought of as the objectives and practice of experimental archaeology has been varied across time and usually connected with the author’s personal stances on archaeology as a discipline generally. Most historiographical reviews of experimental archaeology have tended to be chronological, outlining the activities of antiquarians, then focusing on its revival in the 1960s and 1970s, especially, before moving through its different theoretical approaches since, from processual to post-processual archaeology, as if one succeeded the other in value. Our perspective is that experimental archaeology is a broad approach, varying from closely recorded scientific experiments in laboratories, to actualistic, practical-oriented experiments in the open-air, to experiential investigations of buildings and crafts. All, we suggest, are valid approaches to seeking a better understanding of the past.

However, since its revival in the 1960s and 1970s, it is fair to say that experimental archaeology has traditionally been associated with a positivist, scientific approach, involving the testing of hypotheses and the rigorous gathering of data to investigate specific topics. By focusing on practical problems for which one could propose solutions and gather quantifiable, material data on house architecture, technology, agriculture, amongst other things, scholars thought that they could establish how things might have been done in the past (e.g. Ascher 1961; Coles 1979; Reynolds 1999). It has also been suggested that experimental archaeological replications could provide useful analogies to interpret the archaeological record (Mathieu 2002). Despite significant developments in archaeological theory over the decades, it is still an approach that lies at the heart of the discipline, whether that be in controlled laboratory situation or in actual experiments carried out in the open air (e.g. Outram 2008).

However, in recent years, a surprising amount of time after the emergence of post-processual theoretical approaches in archaeology generally, many authors have argued that experimental archaeology might also involve innovative, experiential interrogations of past lifeways and material culture, so as to explore and understand how people interacted with each other and the world. Cunningham et al. (2008) enquired whether experimental archaeology should only be used in a scientific sense, and if this did not risk ignoring some aspects of people’s lives in the past. They asked if the scientific approach was even appropriate for investigating all aspects of the past, and if we might also think about the phenomenology of objects, the ‘feel of things’, the experience of buildings. Similarly, Gheorgiu and Children (2011), in their introduction to Experiments in Past Materialities, suggested that an overly scientist approach risked losing a sense of past lives, and proposed that by using interdisciplinary approaches we could reconsider the subjective role of the researcher, and that cognitive, phenomenological, embodied approaches could lead experimental archaeology to more sensitive understandings of past humankind.

This perspective is also evident in Bodil Petersson’s and Lars Erik Narmo’s (2011) introductory essay, ‘A journey in time’ in their edited book Experimental Archaeology: Between Enlightenment and Experience. They suggested that experimental archaeology was a subject stuck with scientific ideals emanating from positivist traditions from the 1960s and 1970s. They proposed that we can have an experimental archaeology that is both ‘knowledge-focused’ and ‘experience-oriented’, and that we can give more weight to experience, sensory and emotional aspects, with strong emphasis on education and communication. Fouls (2013, 7) argues that a diversity of approaches can help archaeologists to ‘link objective and humanistic approaches to understanding the material record’, as part of the archaeological discipline. Most recently, Carolyn Graves-Brown (2015) in an excellent introduction to her edited book, Egyptology in the Present: Experiential and Experimental Methods in Archaeology has suggested that experimental and the experiential approaches, while being distinctively different, are part of a continuum and one should not be privileged over the other, and
Indeed ‘living in the past’ should not be denigrated either.

These are principles with which, as editors of this book, we agree. Moreover experimental archaeology also has significant potential for public engagement in museums, as it literally engages all the senses in the demonstrations of crafts and technologies (see Comis 2010).

This publication contains the proceedings of a two-day workshop on experimental archaeology which took place in Athens in October 2017 at the initiative of the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens (IIHSA: www.iihsa.gr). The idea came about in recognition, on the one hand, of the ground-breaking role played in recent years by the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture, UCD School of Archaeology, in connection with the advances in experimental archaeology as outlined above, and the significant contributions that researchers and museum practitioners working in Greece have made in the field over the last decades, on the other.

On the first day of the workshop, the papers were presented at the premises of the Irish Institute, 51A Notara St., Athens. The accompanying practical demonstrations took place on the following day, hosted by the Museum of Cycladic Art, and organised by the third partner of the workshop, Dr Nikolas Papadimitriou, the then Curator of the museum, with a long involvement in ancient craft experimentation, and demonstrations at the museum. The large audience which attended both events included university students, researchers and academics, demonstrating the importance now attached to experimental archaeology as an approach to the discipline of archaeology of equal value to other approaches.

The majority of the contributions in this volume are case studies in the context of the ancient Mediterranean world and particularly Greece, but two have a north European focus (O’Sullivan and O’Neill, O’Neill), and one (Molloy) has a more cross-cultural outlook. A number of the papers focus on technological reconstructions and problem-solving experiments addressing past manufacturing techniques and the *chaîne opératoire*, and therefore adopt a ‘knowledge-focused’ approach starting from one object (but with wider implications), such as a small ornament (a gold bead: Konstantinid-Sybridi et al.) or a tool (a type of sword: Maragoudaki), or a category of objects (the moulds for the casting of non-ferrous metal objects: O’Neill). O’Sullivan and O’Neill account for the reconstruction of an early medieval Irish roundhouse based on quite specific archaeological and environmental evidence, and discuss how this has enabled insights into the building, use and destruction of such houses in the past. A more general perspective is adopted for the examination of wall-painting techniques (Vlalogiakis), and the ancient craftsmanship techniques and smithing activities relating to bronze-working (Molloy). The experiments on Neolithic textiles (Sarri and Mokdad) have the additional objective of exploring the possible creative dialogue between different crafts (pottery making and weaving) and between art and craft. Two articles explore different manufacturing processes for ceramic production from Cretan contexts. The first tests the building and operation of a Minoan pottery kiln (Day and Kobik) and focuses on manufacturing aspects with insights about the experiences of the craftsmen, while the second (Morris et al.), explores the modelling of figurines and the social messages that are conveyed through object creation. Some of the challenges faced during the construction of the Minoan kiln in Ireland rather than in its original location, but also the consideration by O’Neill of the importance of the depositional environment in the survival of clay moulds, are reminders that environmental dynamics and climate conditions, and not just the social context, technical know-how and availability of materials, play a part in influencing manufacturing choices and innovations.

Audience reaction during experimental sessions for the public are considered in one paper (Sarri and Mokdad), but in practice it was possible for all those who organized practical sessions in day two of the workshop to take advantage of this. To those present at these sessions, both as contributors and as observers, the demonstrations offered an array of experiences gained through the senses, such as the smell of burning metal and wood-chippings, and the sounds of sawing, metal beating and the working loom (Figures 1-4). Most of the demonstrations on the day were carried out by experienced craftsmen with interest in ancient technology, which is the closest we can get to the embodiment of ancient craftsmen. The limitations for the rest of us in achieving the highly specialized knowledge and skill required for some of these crafts is recognised in Molloy’s contribution whose objectives were ‘not to achieve any degree of ancient knowledge but to physically learn through the simulation of some of ancient craft people’s actions’.

In recent years, ideas about craft, making and ‘maker culture’ have been widespread not only amongst craft communities, but also in academia in the humanities, social sciences and computer sciences. One of the interesting themes to emerge in the Athens workshop was the important role of modern experienced craftspeople in the investigation and understanding of past technologies. On the one hand, craftspeople bring an immense amount of practical, embodied knowledge and sense of ‘can do’ to the making of things, challenging the interpretations of archaeologists who may be adept

Images from day two of the Workshop (Museum of Cycladic Art).
Practical demonstrations accompanying the papers

Figure 1. Participants observing one of the demonstrations.

Figure 2. Ulrikka Mokdad demonstrating the weaving of Neolithic patterns, with Kalliopi Sarri.

Figure 3. Epaminontas Venieris explaining the manufacture of Cycladic marble figurines, with Brendan O’Neill experimenting.

Figure 4. Akis Goumas creating gold granules for the decoration of the Mycenaean bead.
at excavating soils, understanding typologies, or using a camera, but may have little or no real craft skills. On the other hand, modern craftspeople are themselves embedded in modern society, with its values, ideas about status and role, a real need for financial payment and occasionally a sense of the urgency of deadlines, so modern craftspeople are not time travellers to the past any more than archaeologists are. We should therefore beware of an overly practical, ‘common sense’ approach to interpreting past societies, because often there is not a sense of things that is ‘common’ to us and to people in the past.

The papers in this volume undeniably show then that experimental archaeology can be about making, understanding, and storytelling (O’Sullivan, et al., 2014; Sørensen and O’Sullivan 2014). It can be about making things from the past, gaining understanding of the making process itself, and telling stories about people and things through the knowledge gathered.

Acknowledgements

The editors would like to express their very special thanks to colleague Dr Nikolas Papadimitriou without whose organizational skills and collaboration the event and consequently this book would not have been possible. We wish to thank the Museum of Cycladic Art for the use of the spacious rooms of the Museum of Cycladic Art for the practical experiments of day two of the workshop, and particularly its Director, Professor Nicholas Stampolidis. We would also like to acknowledge the helpful assistance of the staff of the Museum during the event. The Assistant Director of the Irish Institute, Dr Christina Papoulia, bore the brunt of the organisation of the workshop. Our colleagues Dr Yannis Papadatos (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), Professor Georgia Kourtessi-Phlippakis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), Professor William Schinder (Washington College, USA/UCD School of Archaeology) and craftsmen Dimitris Alexandrou and Epaninondas Venieris, who for a variety of reasons were unable to contribute in this volume, added significantly to the success of the workshop. We thank them all for their goodwill and participation. Finally, for their generous support for the event, we wish to express our gratitude to IIHSA patrons Bob McCabe and Anna Mallikourtis.

Bibliography


