

with her palette, brings biography to life. As an educational asset, the film may stimulate questions about how the once scientifically endorsed notion of a 'type' – 'physique' or 'character' – made its way into both popular and artistic portrayal.

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Materiality

ARNOLD, DEAN E. *Maya potters' indigenous knowledge: cognition, engagement, and practice*. 264 pp., maps, illus., tables, bibliogr. Boulder: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2018. £56.00 (cloth)

Dean E. Arnold's book presents ethnographic and linguistic data concerning pottery production in the town of Ticul, Yucatán. Drawing on research gleaned over the course of fifty years, *Maya potters' indigenous knowledge* is a reflexive work that considers how paradigm shifts within the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology have impacted methods of ethnoarchaeological research. Arnold specifically acknowledges that his early work, drawing on research conducted during the 1960s, emphasized aligning Maya and Western taxonomies to better understand the accuracy of indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis Western standards. This book is a divergence from this earlier work and instead underscores the importance of understanding indigenous people's knowledge within the context of their own communities of practice. This work is underpinned by Material Engagement Theory (MET), which allows for a more layered exploration of Maya pottery production as it embraces the dialogic relationship between human agents and their material world by 'stress[ing] the knowledge-based nature of human action, and the reflexiveness that the material world exerts on the mind' (p. 8). Arnold suggests that his ethnographic research experiences in Ticul, which hinged on participant observation, facilitated an embodiment of knowledge that allowed him to understand the cognitive processes and tactile experiences that inform local knowledge.

The bulk of the book is dedicated to a detailed examination of the stages of pottery production. Arnold outlines local conceptions of the natural environment; follows the procurement of raw materials for the construction of paste; describes the various forms of pottery created at Ticul; and ends with a discussion of the drying and firing processes (chaps 3-7). These topical chapters are framed as 'engagements' (e.g. 'The potters'

engagement with paste preparation'), which allows the author to elaborate on the wide range of linguistic, social, cognitive, and environmental factors that shape these aspects of pottery production. This method of organization highlights how points of engagement are imbued with meanings and are differently affected by shifting social and environmental interactions over time. This method of organization also allows for elaboration on how specific components of MET (e.g. the *chaîne opératoire*, feedback, and the semantic structure of knowledge) inform indigenous knowledges. The author is especially effective at conveying how sensorial feedback, which is necessarily rooted in embodied knowledge, allows potters to prepare pastes without set recipes and to adapt pastes as access to and the quality of raw materials change. While Arnold is successful in highlighting changes within the context of specific engagements, the book lacks a comprehensive discussion of how these individual changes overlap and interdigitate with one another.

Chapter 8 is perhaps the most compelling and challenging of the book's sections as it considers how Maya potters' engagements with their local environments to procure raw materials and ultimately produce pottery relate to archaeology. Arnold contends that Ticul pottery may be interpreted as a 'taskscape', drawing on the archaeological work of Tim Ingold ('The temporality of the landscape', *World Archaeology* 25: 2, 1993) and Kostalena Michelaki *et al.* ('Using provenance data to assess archaeological landscapes', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 39: 2, 2012; 'Local clay sources as histories of human-landscape interactions', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 22: 3, 2014), because Ticul pottery reflects contemporary engagements with the landscape that are relevant to the task of pottery-making. Through this added ethnographic dimension, Arnold's work pushes beyond the limitations faced by prehistoric archaeologists in order to describe how Ticul pottery 'embeds the memory of the landscape and its raw materials, the sense of place of their sources, and their religious meaning' (p. 206). However, within the same short chapter, Arnold also suggests that Maya potters are not always conscious of the meanings embedded in their products, which raises the question of whether the author's interpretations are valid. Furthermore, he demonstrates how dramatically the Ticul pottery taskscape and the meanings associated with it have changed over time and across space, thereby undercutting the usefulness of ethnographic research to inform archaeological

interpretations. Arnold acknowledges this problem by analogizing past and present, an issue that plagues all ethnoarchaeological research.

That noted, *Maya potters' indigenous knowledge* is an important contribution to the fields of anthropology and ethnoarchaeology. Arnold successfully emphasizes the limitations of traditional ethnoarchaeology and advocates for a more ethnographically informed approach, as this better positions researchers to understand the broader contexts in which indigenous practices are formed and adapted. He also effectively highlights the local variability in pottery production and suggests that, just as is the case today, Maya people in the past lived in diverse natural and social contexts and that indigenous knowledge has always been contingent upon specific communities of practice.

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BAILEY, DOUG. *Breaking the surface: an art/archaeology of prehistoric architecture*. xvi, 338 pp., maps, figs, illus., bibliogr. Oxford: Univ. Press, 2018. £25.49 (paper)

Archaeology has long found inspiration from other disciplines, including drawing on contemporary art to rethink interpretation of the material past. Renfrew's volume *Figuring it out* (2003) argues that archaeological process and artistic method echo each other, both attempting to find new ways of explaining the world. Within this intellectual tradition, Doug Bailey has explored how contemporary art can aid in producing disruptive narratives about the past which challenge conventional explanations for archaeological phenomena. This approach was applied in his *Prehistoric figurines* (2005), but the manifesto for this approach is perhaps best laid out in a paper titled 'Disarticulate – repurpose – disrupt'. Here, Bailey articulates how he envisages art/archaeology as 'locat[ing] the past honestly in the politics of the present' (*Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 27: 514, 2017: 700) through forcing different views and engagements with the materials of the past to challenge Western hegemony.

In *Breaking the surface*, Bailey pushes this further to consider not materials (often solidly reassuring in their physical presence), but the act of creating a void, which in formal archaeological terminology is a 'cut'. Cuts pose a metaphysical challenge, being necessary for understanding an archaeological site while also defining an absence. As a result, Bailey notes, there has been

much more theoretical debate in archaeology about the act of deposition than about cutting the ground. This monograph redresses the balance but is also a broader mediation on what it means to cut. Bailey's starting point, how to interpret the Neolithic pit-houses from Măgura, Southern Romania, is thus only the beginning of a discussion about how cuts, and the voids they create, are understood by philosophy, psychology, and linguistic anthropology, as well as archaeology. Chapters on these themes are interspersed with three different acts of cutting from contemporary art and complemented with three short 'inter-text' pieces.

Pit-houses are irregular in shape, dug to uneven depths, and thought to have roofs consisting of slight timbers supporting branches or animal skins. These semi-subterranean dwellings (which were likely to have been temporary, rather than permanent) are mostly interpreted through the material objects in their fills. They have been taken for granted as a means of creating domestic locales in the landscape, making it challenging to move beyond interpretative narratives that regard the Neolithic, along with farming, as synonymous with the spread of domesticity. Perhaps more could have been done in these chapters to reveal the background of cultural evolutionary and colonial thought, which cast a shadow over the politics of studying the European Neolithic. However, the overt politics of the volume arises in its chapters (2, 5, and 8) on three contemporary works of art. In each case, not only is the work of art described, but also responses to it are contextualized within the political landscape within which each was created: the AIDS crisis (Ron Athey's *4 Scenes*), the inequality of urban regeneration (Gordon Matt-Clark's *Conical Intersect*), and in introducing new forms of art (Lucio Fontana's *Tagli* and *Buchi* paintings). Thus, the text encourages consideration of how these cuts challenge normative views of the body, city landscape, and consciousness.

From these philosophical and psychological explorations of cuts and voids numerous new ideas emerge, elaborating on how holes change and affect perception. It is noted that the human vision finds concavities easier to process than convex shapes, perhaps demonstrating a preference for boundaries. Similar insight is provided by chapter 6 on the linguistic anthropology of cutting and breaking verbs. Important differences between language groups are emphasized, but common themes emerge in how language is used to specify the material cut into or broken apart, the tools used, and the