

Archaeologies Of The Contemporary Past

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The archaeology of the recent and contemporary past—that is, the archaeology of places and events that relate to the period of recent or living memory—is a dynamic new field which engages critically with what it means to be ‘us’, with the politics of late-modernity, and with the nature, shape and relevance of archaeology as a contemporary research practice.

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The archaeology of the contemporary past is a new and interdisciplinary field of research that intersects

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with heritage studies, art, ethnography, and modern history. This kind of archaeology, as it is practiced today, was born in the late 1990s. However, its intellectual roots go further back (Harrison 2011: 144-9).

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The Contributors to this volume represent the most recent research in this exciting new field. This new archaeology gives a crucial understanding of the experience of modernity and the communities it continues to affect.

An Archaeology of the Contemporary Era approaches the contemporary age, between the late nineteenth

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and twenty-first centuries, as an archaeological period defined by specific material processes. It reflects on the theory and practice of the archaeology of the contemporary past from epistemological, political, ethical and aesthetic viewpoints, and characterises the present based on archaeological traces from the spatial, temporal and material excesses that define it. The materiality of our era, the book argues, and particularly its ruins and rubbish, reveals something profound, original and disturbing about humanity. This is the first attempt at describing the contemporary era from an archaeological point of view. Global in scope, the book brings together case studies from every continent and considers sources from peripheral and rarely considered traditions, meanwhile engaging in an interdisciplinary dialogue with philosophy, anthropology, history and geography. An Archaeology of the Contemporary Era will be essential reading for students and practitioners of the archaeology of the contemporary past, historical archaeology and archaeological theory. It will also be of interest to anybody concerned with globalisation, modernity and the Anthropocene.

Rodney Harrison and John Schofield explore how archaeology can inform the study of our own society and other late-modern societies through detailed case studies and a summary of the existing literature. They draw together cross-disciplinary perspectives, and develop a new agenda for the study of the materiality of contemporary societies.

It has been clear for many years that the ways in which archaeology is practised have been a direct product of a particular set of social, cultural, and historical circumstances - archaeology is always carried out in the present. More recently, however, many have begun to consider how archaeological techniques might be used to reflect more directly on the contemporary world itself: how we might undertake

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archaeologies of, as well as in the present. This Handbook is the first comprehensive survey of an exciting and rapidly expanding sub-field and provides an authoritative overview of the newly emerging focus on the archaeology of the present and recent past. In addition to detailed archaeological case studies, it includes essays by scholars working on the relationships of different disciplines to the archaeology of the contemporary world, including anthropology, psychology, philosophy, historical geography, science and technology studies, communications and media, ethnoarchaeology, forensic archaeology, sociology, film, performance, and contemporary art. This volume seeks to explore the boundaries of an emerging sub-discipline, to develop a tool-kit of concepts and methods which are applicable to this new field, and to suggest important future trajectories for research. It makes a significant intervention by drawing together scholars working on a broad range of themes, approaches, methods, and case studies from diverse contexts in different parts of the world, which have not previously been considered collectively.

Contemporary Archaeology and the City foregrounds the archaeological study of post-industrial and other urban transformations through a diverse, international collection of case studies. Over the past decade contemporary archaeology has emerged as a dynamic force for dissecting and contextualizing the material complexities of present-day societies. Contemporary archaeology challenges conventional anthropological and archaeological conceptions of the past by pushing temporal boundaries closer to, if not into, the present. The volume is organized around three themes that highlight the multifaceted character of urban transitions in present-day cities - creativity, ruination, and political action. The case studies offer comparative perspectives on transformative global urban processes in local contexts through research conducted in the struggling, post-industrial cities of Detroit, Belfast, Indianapolis,

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Berlin, Liverpool, Belem, and post-Apartheid Cape Town, as well as the thriving urban centres of Melbourne, New York City, London, Chicago, and Istanbul. Together, the volume contributions demonstrate how the contemporary city is an urban palimpsest comprised by archaeological assemblages - of the built environment, the surface, and buried sub-surface - that are traces of the various pasts entangled with one another in the present. This volume aims to position the city as one of the most important and dynamic arenas for archaeological studies of the contemporary by presenting a range of theoretically-engaged case studies that highlight some of the major issues that the study of contemporary cities pose for archaeologists.

After Discourse is an interdisciplinary response to the recent trend away from linguistic and textual approaches and towards things and their affects. The new millennium brought about serious changes to the intellectual landscape. Favoured approaches associated with the linguistic and the textual turn lost some of their currency, and were followed by a new curiosity and concern for things and their natures. Gathering contributions from archaeology, heritage studies, history, geography, literature and philosophy, After Discourse offers a range of reflections on what things are, how we become affected by them, and the ethical concerns they give rise to. Through a varied constellation of case studies, it explores ways of dealing with matters which fall outside, become othered from, or simply cannot be grasped through perspectives derived solely from language and discourse. After Discourse provides challenging new perspectives for scholars and students interested in other-than-textual encounters between people and the objects with which we share the world.

Since the nineteenth century, mass-production, consumerism and cycles of material replacement have

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accelerated; increasingly larger amounts of things are increasingly victimized rapidly and made redundant. At the same time, processes of destruction have immensely intensified, although largely overlooked when compared to the research and social significance devoted to consumption and production. The outcome is a ruin landscape of derelict factories, closed shopping malls, overgrown bunkers and redundant mining towns; a ghostly world of decaying modern debris normally omitted from academic concerns and conventional histories. The archaeology of the recent or contemporary past has grown fast during the last decade. This development has been concurrent with a broader popular, artistic and scholarly interest in modern ruins in general. *Ruin Memories* explores how the ruins of modernity are conceived and assigned cultural value in contemporary academic and public discourses, reassesses the cultural and historical value of modern ruins and suggests possible means for reaffirming their cultural and historic significance. Crucial for this reassessment is a concern with decay and ruination, and with the role things play in expressing the neglected, unsuccessful and ineffable. Abandonment and ruination is usually understood negatively through the tropes of loss and deprivation; things are degraded and humiliated while the information, knowledge and memory embedded in them become lost along the way. Without even ignoring its many negative and traumatizing aspects, a main question addressed in this book is whether ruination also can be seen as an act of disclosure. If ruination disturbs the routinized and ready-to-hand, to what extent can it also be seen as a recovery of memory as exposing meanings and presences that perhaps are only possible to grasp at second hand when no longer immersed in their withdrawn and useful reality? Anybody interested in the archaeology of the contemporary past will find *Ruin Memories* an essential guide to the very latest theoretical research in this emerging field of archaeological thought.

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A unique collection of newly written essays by archaeologists working in a variety of contexts and geographical areas, *Archaeologies of Memory* is a groundbreaking text that presents a coherent framework for the study of memory in past societies. Serves as an accessible introduction to central issues in the study of memory, including authority and identity, and the role memory plays in their creation and transformation. Presents a collection of newly commissioned essays that provide a coherent framework for the study of memory in past societies. Brings together essays from both anthropological and classical archaeologists. Includes contributions drawn from a variety of cultures and time periods, including New Kingdom Egypt and the prehistoric American Southwest.

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