

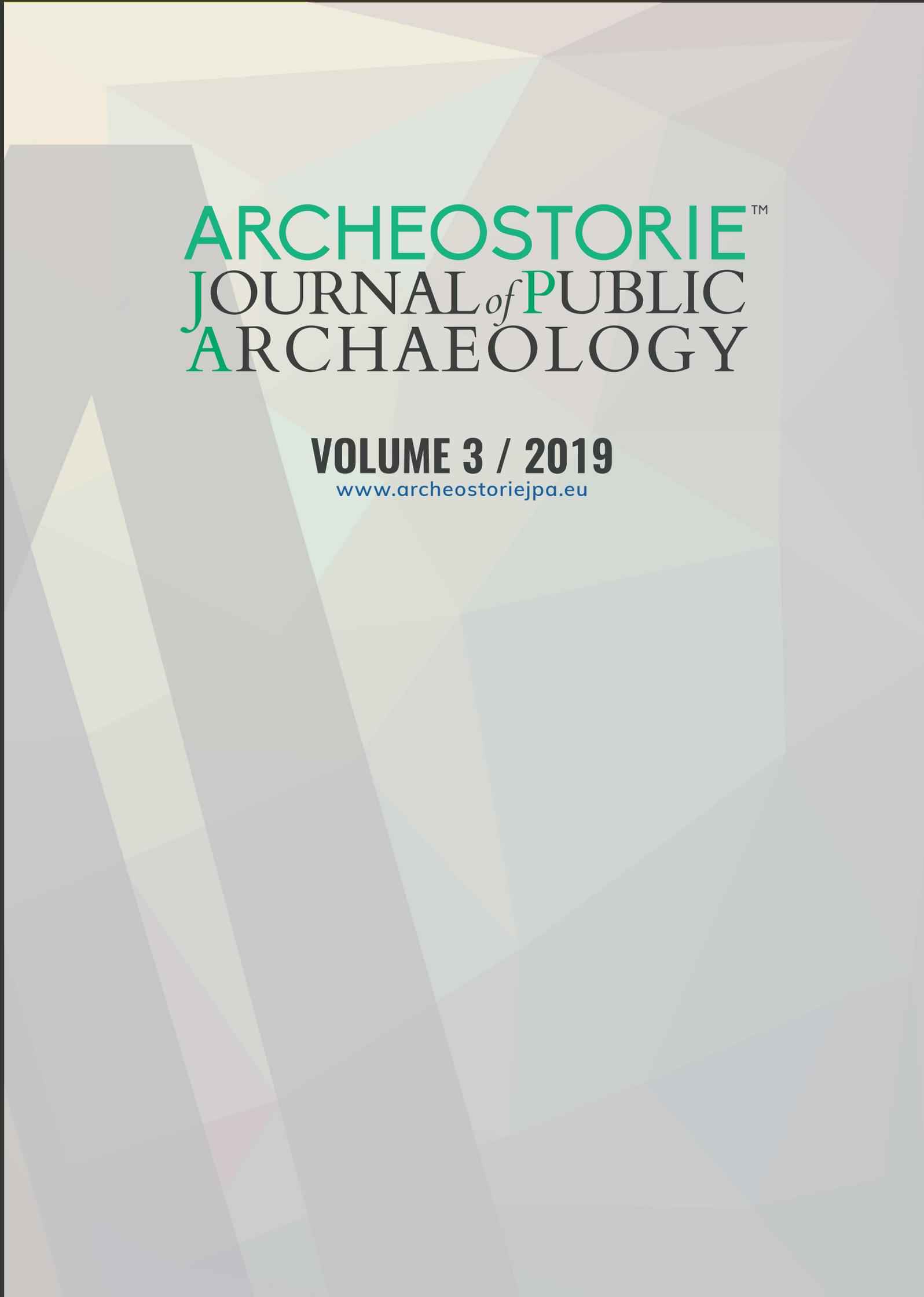


ARCHEOSTORIE<sup>®</sup>  
JOURNAL *of* PUBLIC  
ARCHAEOLOGY

**VOLUME 3 / 2019**

*Topic of the Year: Museum Archaeology*





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**VOLUME 3 / 2019**

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# INDEX

## 7 Editorial

*Cinzia Dal Maso & Luca Peyronel*

## 11 Topic of the Year

Excellence and craft. A network of museums to challenge post-earthquake crisis in the Marches 13

*Simona Antolini & Jessica Piccinini*

The Museo delle Culture and its audience: A five-year balance 25

*Carolina Orsini*

The museum belongs to the participating community: Social engagement experiences at the Angera Civic Archaeological and Open-Air Museum, Lake Maggiore, Italy 37

*Valentina Baietti & Cristina Miedico*

Ancient Near Eastern mementoes: The archaeological 'souvenir' industries between replica and invention 51

*Silvana Di Paolo*

Perspectives in the first person. A questionnaire on museum semiotics 61

*Maria Emanuela Oddo*

## 69 Satura Lanx

Augmented reality in Brescia: Evaluation questionnaires in San Salvatore basilica. A joint process between managers, public, and university 71

*Nicola Delbarba & Francesca Morandini*

Citizen participation in Cultural Heritage management: The Integrity Pact pilot program	85
--	----

*Paola Liliana Buttiglione & Anna Maria Marras*

## 99 Archaeotales

### Masterpiece

*Giorgia Cappelletti*

Augustus of Labicana Street	101
Boxer at Rest	103
The Evening Shadow	105
Death at sea: The crater of the shipwreck	107
The Diver	109
The Trundholm Sun Chariot	111

## 113 News

In Jordan, public archaeology is a solid reality	115
--	-----

*Marta Lorenzon*

Classical Pop: A surprising exhibition	117
--	-----

*Cinzia Dal Maso*

Sea of Hope: A graphic novel that links together ancient and modern migrations	119
---	-----

*Michela Nocita*

A dive into the blue: Fighting autism at Paestum Museum	123
---	-----

*Cinzia Dal Maso*

## 125 Reviews

Art forgers in 20th century Italy. A portrait gallery	127
---	-----

*Alessandra Cilio*

# Editorial

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The topic of this year's issue of *Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology* is entitled *Museum Archaeology. Social engagement, active participation and community empowerment*. Museums live within society and change in step with cultural, social, political, and economical transformations. They are facing the challenges of the modern global world and are charged with high responsibilities in the communication of the heritage they represent. Museums as institutions or by virtue of their collections can offer a trusted space to explore such complex social issues.

In particular, archaeological museums enable us to experience cultures of the past and show, behind the artefacts, a world different from our own, more or less far from us in time and space. They provide interpretations of material culture that expose what 'binds and divides' different individuals and groups in the past and the present, allowing us to interrogate deep-rooted issues of identity and belonging.

If archaeological museums were created in the past to house and display artefacts, the museums of the 21st century distinguish themselves for what they do with these collections. Collections are in fact important because they are human-made or modified artefacts, and because humans regard them as important (or not), as their heritage (or not).

Are museums doing enough to put people first and how are they working to achieve this objective?

We all agree that archaeological museums should allow people to discover the past, becoming time and space gates. They provide the way to know and understand the past, to experience our personal relation with the past, to establish ties between the past and the present. Archaeological museums are thus crucial for society, preserving and shaping the public's view of the past. Therefore, they play a relevant cultural role in a community and represent an important asset of social welfare.

We keep saying that museums should open their gates wider and foster participation by the community at large, so that everybody can have a say in the construction of cultural heritage. However, we recognize that museums have often complex requirements of management and different organizational models that need compromises and trade-offs on many fronts. It is thus necessary to articulate and discuss these constraints and difficulties and highlight the economic and practical hurdles to achieving social impact.

Archaeological museums in the contemporary world must search for a balance between the demands of documenting, studying and preserving artefacts, assuring knowledge and enhancement of their collections, and the dynamic instances of changing pattern of cultural heritage meanings, community needs, and integration of social values.

This is by no means an easy task and, above all, there is no univocal solution: communities are different one from the other and museums are different as well, and they can leverage on different tools and assets. Each museum, thus, is bound to find its own way, although there are best practices that can inspire or suggest paths to follow. Choosing what to collect and preserve, what to put in storage and what on display, each museum also decides what represents the past and its relations with the present.

But how could archaeological museums also nurture the value of respecting forms of otherness relating to gender, origin, ability, and other social, economic and life circumstances? Does the changing role of the museums make them social justice and human rights champions, acting against racism and any kind of discrimination? Do museums pursue post-colonial agendas that allow for multiple perspectives? Do they pursue social justice in every respect? These are some of the questions we were asking for when we launched the call for papers for AJPA 3rd issue and now in the

section 'Topic of the Year' you can find an array of articles dealing with projects and practices, methodological approaches and theoretical reflections on archaeological museums.

The role of museums in the regeneration of the territory after natural catastrophic events is discussed in the paper by Simona Antolini and Jessica Piccinini starting from the description and critical evaluation of the project 'Techne' (Ancient TECHNOLOGIES and workshop NETWORK), aiming at retrieving the excellence of craftsmanship in the Marche as a contribution to re-challenge the territory after the earthquake of 2016. The authors illustrate the case-study of a textile museum (Museo della Tela) of Macerata pointing out at the importance of a diachronic and multidisciplinary approach in the valorisation and preservation of artisan know-how, and the creation of a museum network involving different stakeholders is considered the best system to foster community cohesion assuring also economic benefits.

Public engagement and inclusive participation are discussed in other two articles. Carolina Orsini, curator of the Mudec - Museo delle Culture of Milan, offers a five-year balance of the activities carried out by the museum, illustrating the principles adopted in the arrangement of the permanent exhibition that aimed at emphasizing the relations between local history and a global background embedded in the selection of objects. Moreover, Orsini explains the museum's cultural policies and projects of public engagement of native communities settled in Milan, which are informed by an inclusive approach and by the enhancement of the two-century history of migrations in the town through the objects on display.

We remain in Lombardy with the paper by Valentina Baietti and Cristina Miedico, discussing a recent project of local community engagement carried out by the small museum of Angera. The first results show how can be effective the adoption of branding strategies and the use of commercial and professional spaces outside the museum, fostering social and cultural interactions.

Moving to a broader and large-scale perspective, the paper by Maria Emanuela Oddo presented the preliminary results of semiotic research in museum communication, analysing the use of the first-person narrative in Italian archaeological museums, through a quantitative-qualitative survey of thirteen museums.

The topic of archaeological 'souvenir' industries is at the centre of the article by S. Di Paolo that analyses modern replicas of ancient Near Eastern artefacts kept in museums. Starting from the use of duplicates the paper offers an interesting evaluation on how the past is experienced through the reproduction of ancient objects.

It is not by chance that similar themes are addressed also in the news and reviews sections (see below), since the complex subject of archaeological replicas has been called recently for the attention of the media in relation with the destruction operated by the Islamic fundamentalists especially in Syria and Iraq. It has been thus debated especially taking into account the questions of restoration's methodologies, local community involvement, and the use of new technologies of virtual reconstruction.

Our Satura Lanx section includes two papers. Delbarba and Morandini make the point on augmented reality technologies for the enhancement of archaeological sites. Their paper deals in particular with the new virtual reconstruction of San Salvatore in Brescia, which is the first AR/VR experience in Italy on an Early Middle Age site, discussing also the results of a questionnaire on the applied technology submitted to more than seven hundred people that clearly indicate the interest by the public in using ICT advanced tools for a better understanding of historical and archaeological sites.

The important topic of administrative transparency in the use of European funds for the enhancement of cultural heritage is discussed in the paper by Buttiglione and Marras. The description of the case-study - the Integrity Pact pilot project in Sibari managed by the international NGO ActionAid Italy - is functional to analyse the role of supervising independent subject acting as monitoring authority and to illustrate the activities related with citizen participation and people's direct engagement in project activities.

'Masterpiece' is an *Archeostorie* storytelling podcast series, whose episodes deal with famous works of art from antiquity, with structured narratives written by Giorgia Cappelletti and read by Francesco Nocito, Chiara Boracchi and Andrea Cazzato. We have selected and translated some podcasts for the Archaeotales section, offering a fascinating tour of Etruscan,

Greek, and Roman sculpture, metalworking and painting through the stories of famous masterpieces. The importance of podcast in public archaeology has been recently pointed out by several scholars and on the web we can easily appreciate the success of this online digital tool that re-discover the strength of the words and the emotional impact of the voice.

As usual, the Archeonews section highlights some events, exhibition and projects carried out in Italy during 2019. Marta Lorenzon writes about the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan (ICHAJ), held in Florence on January 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. Topics of public archaeology and sustainable development appeared in a consistent number of papers, testifying for the growing importance of public archaeology in Near Eastern countries. Two news presented projects involving community participation: one is the initiative 'A dive into the blue' of the Paestum Museum aimed at stimulating reactions and feelings in autistic people with a visit to a museum depository; the other is entitled 'Sea of hope' and was elaborated by high-school students of Liceo Pilo Albertelli of Rome in the thematic competition 'Buon Senso' promoted by the Italian Ministry of Education and supported by Laterza publisher with the subject 'migration, hospitality and

integration'. The interesting and innovative exhibition 'Classical Pop' curated by Mirella Serlorenzi, Marcello Barbanera and Antonio Pinelli (Rome, Palazzo Massimo and Crypta Balbi, from December 2018 to April 2019) is reviewed by Cinzia dal Maso, who pointed out how serial artistic production is not only modern but timeless.

A similar subject is addressed in a four-episodes series on art forgery from the past to the present, produced by Rai Cultura, the thematic channel of the Italian National Broadcasting Television in 2019. The documentary films, one of which is reviewed in detail by Alessandra Cilio, spans from the role of the copies in the Roman period to the modern forgeries of archaeological artefacts, inviting the viewers to think about the concept of replicas through times.

While most of the proof-reading texts were ready at the beginning of 2020, the redaction and editing work of other sections has been strongly delayed by the pandemic situation. Notwithstanding the many difficulties, we decided to online publish the whole issue once it is completed, to keep the standard of the previous ones.

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