



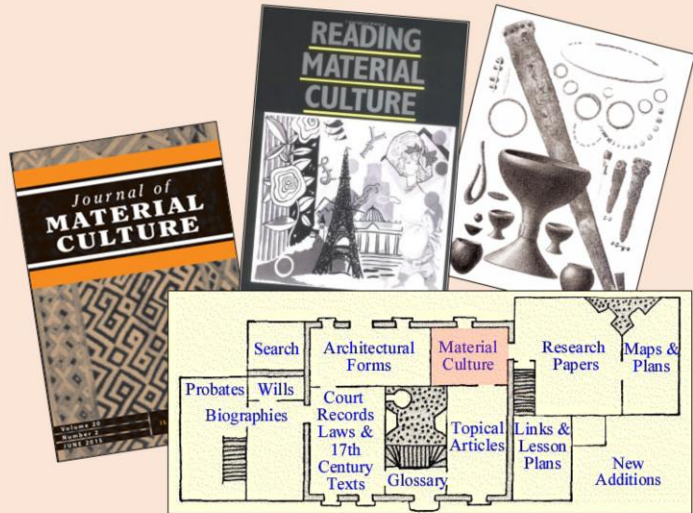
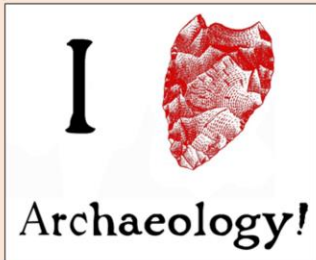
Laia Pujol-Tost, PhD



EAA Glasgow 2015

Mixed exhibits

The best of
both worlds?



Archaeology is mostly about materiality. [] Its epistemological basis is founded on the relationship between humans and the material culture.



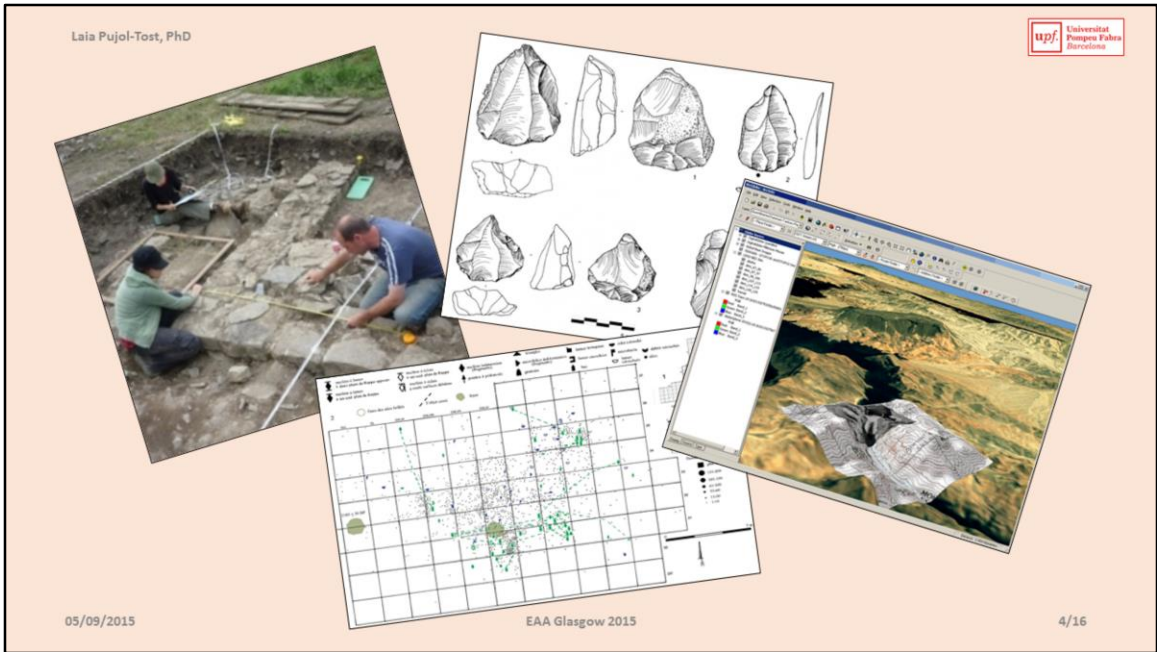
Science Museum of London

Archaeological Museum of
Bordeaux (France)

Acropolis Museum (Athens)



On the other hand, objects are later displayed in museums to convey knowledge... []
about the past.



Unfortunately, as Giannis Hamilakis and other authors have shown, Archaeology is a modern “science”, and therefore it is mostly about the eye, and little about the body. On site, it mostly records and analyses visual, spatial, geometrical features



Neues Museum of Berlin



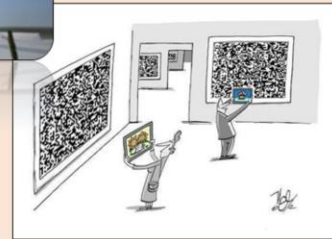
The erect penis of god Min appearing in the Senusret I relief was considered immoral and used to be covered (Petrie Museum in London)

What's the point of going to the museum if you can't play with anything there? If I want to "look at, but not touch" something, I can do that at home with my vegetables...

someecards
user card



At the museum this has meant a universal rule of not touching, and objects are isolated in showcases, [] to protect them from us... and [] us from them.



Then came ICT (before they were called Digital Media), which under the promise of increased accessibility, [] interaction and engagement, reduced archaeological heritage even more to image and visualization: it had been digitalized, that is de-materialized and even [] de-musealized.

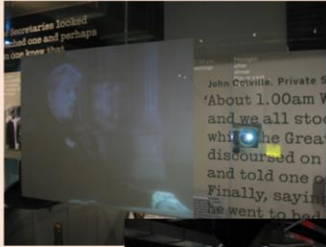


Science Museum of London



Olive Oil Museum at Aghia Paraskevi (Lesvos, Greece)

A series of evaluations conducted in museums since the 90s evidenced a conflict between the exhibition and the new media. The main reason being –Heath and vom Lehn (2005)- that they belonged to different communication paradigms.



Churchill Museum / War Cabinets in London

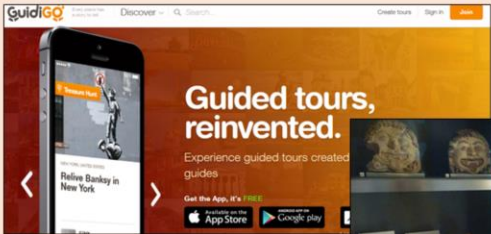


Exhibition "The Ancient Agora of Athens" (Hellenic World, Athens)

After a research conducted by myself in 2007-2008 in different European museums, comparing hands-on and high-tech exhibits, we concluded that the best way to integrate ICT was to "musealize" the interfaces.

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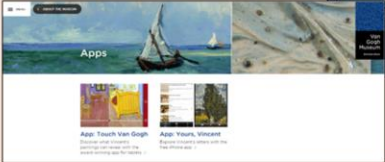
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The CHES Project



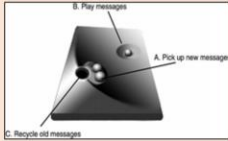
Museums & Mobile
Online Conference 7: October 15th 2013

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Yet, what happened is (for a different number of reasons) that the PC just became... mobile.

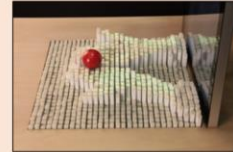
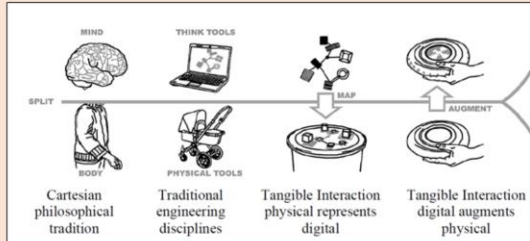


Marble answering machine (Durrell Bishop)

Siftables (Sifteo)



ReactTable (UPF)



inFORM (MIT)

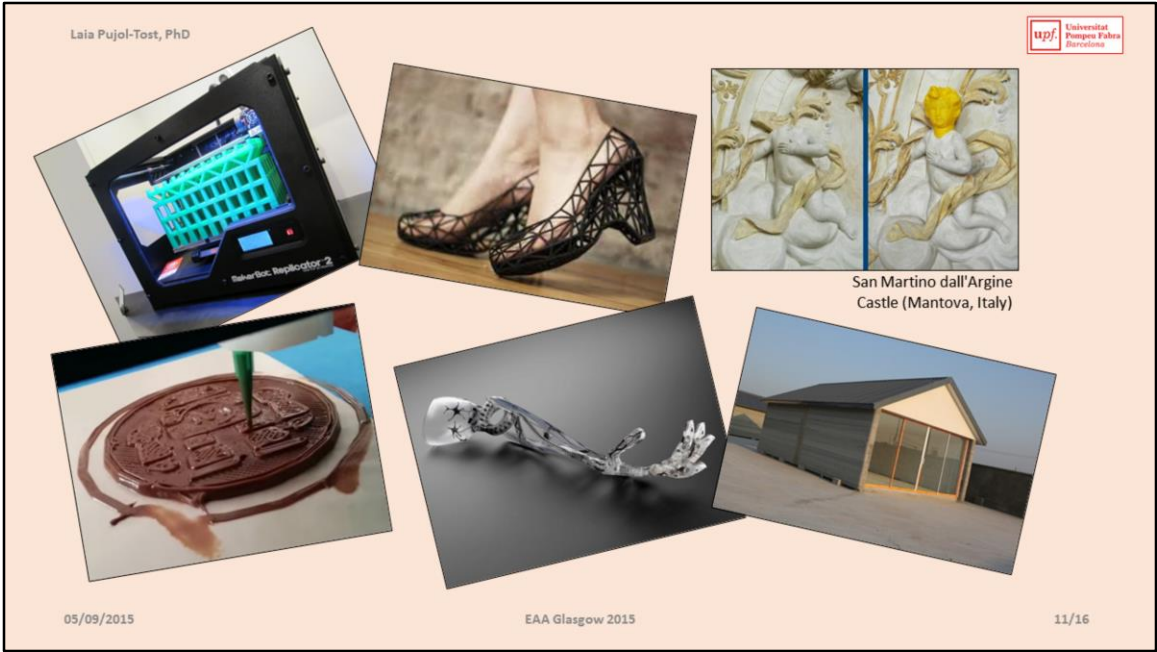


Architectures (LEGO)



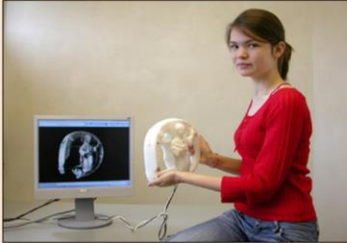
Multi-Touch Table (Fraunhofer IGCD)

Meanwhile, some researchers inside Human-Computer Interaction also advocated for better, more natural ways to interact with computers, and started building since 1990s a new field called Tangible and Embedded Interaction. [] What is interesting for us is the development of “Tangible User Interfaces” [] and the use during the 2000s of CH examples as test beds.



More recently, we have seen 3D printing become the hype.

Virtex (EPOCH)



Science Museum of London



Loupe (meSch)



MOSI (Manchester)



IWMN (Manchester)

As a result of all this, the first mixed exhibits have appeared in European museums, used either as mediators, as smart replicas, as top tables for shared exploration or gaming, or as full-body interactive environments.



Does this mean that we may finally close the circle? That we can recuperate the object and accept tangibility in the cultural heritage field, and thus have the best of both worlds (tangibility and virtuality)? I believe there is a big potential in this area and this is exactly what I am starting to investigate now. // Small digression: It is interesting to see, that (as with storytelling, or interaction, or immersion, or multimediality) that we needed the tsunami of ICT/Digital Media to (re)discover or finally accept (by imposition) things that existed already in the museums field.

Tangible Interaction

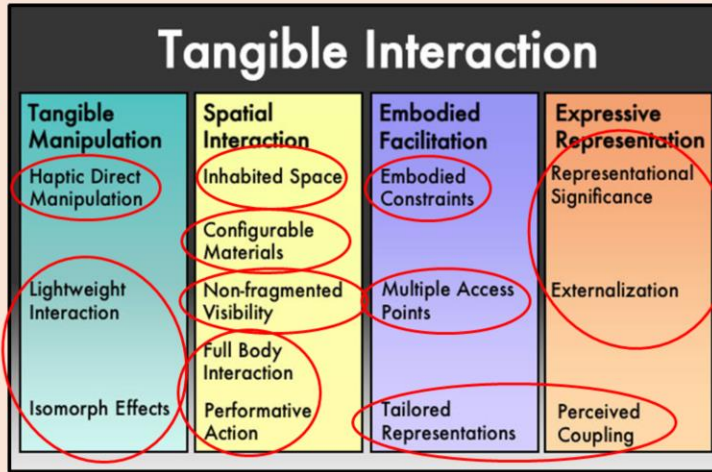
Instead of just visible
(in the showcase)

Takes environment
into account (other
people, other media)

Appreciate
materiality of "real
object"

No heads-down or
split attention

Natural interaction



No added symbolism
(e.g. computer)

Suitable for
exploration in group,
social construction of
meaning (Vygotsky)

Personalization (e.g.
especially suitable for
children - Piaget)

Vs. passive gaze

This is what I would like to debate with you today. 1) The specific advantages of smart replicas and tangible exhibits for CH settings. The most important aspects from this perspective are:

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2) The strategies and threats for their adoption in museums. From my experience, the availability of the equipment increases with time. The real problem is authoring: because of lack of technical/design skills it is almost impossible to develop in-house. Therefore, museums need to commission outside, with all the problems this carries in terms of money, sustainability, workflow, and so on. Yet, EU strategies in FP7 and H2020 put a lot of emphasis in supporting non-expert authoring. And in this respect there is one promising project [] that I would like to bring to your attention: meSch (goal is the in house creation of smart exhibits).



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