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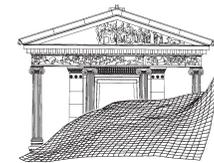
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Contributions are welcome sent over e-mail or on disk. Illustrations and figures should be no larger than A4 and capable of reduction by us to A5. Contributors should include details of their name and address, or position and affiliation. Letters, comments, reviews of forthcoming events or publications are also welcome.

€ 7,00

New approaches to scientific archaeological data communication: the "Museo Narrante" of the Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary

Introduction

This paper deals with new solutions for the musealization of scientific archaeological data and their divulgation to the general public, focusing on the case study of the Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary "Museo Narrante".

The key-concept of this initiative is that a correct archaeological museum should inform people not only about the final theories of scientists and experts, but also on the data and reasoning on which those ideas are based. This concept is even more important when communicating archaeological data for which there is no general agreement in interpretation among scholars. The idea of communicating one century of archaeological investigations at the Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary, and placing the new data from the recent excavations in the context of this research was the main reason for the institution of a new museum in the Paestum area, the Museo Narrante of Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary. It should be noted that the Paestum National Archaeological Museum already displays the findings from the old excavations, so that in instituting a new museum, the "museological" approach had to be completely different and perfectly integrated with the traditional system of display and information.

The new museum is conceived as a "Museo Narrante", i.e. a museum that tells stories. It is a "museum without objects". The focus of the exhibition is information and it is presented in new ways: interactive, multi-sensorial, multi-medial and tailored to the particular scientific archaeological data which it intends to communicate. This paper will analyze a few of the case studies conducted in order to follow this methodological scientific archaeological communication approach.

Scientific archaeological communication beyond hypermedia: case studies of solutions tailored to particular cultural concepts

1st case study: the second room. The research: voice, movies, reconstructions

The **second room** of the museum is dedicated to the history of the archaeological investigation of the site, and visitors enter it after viewing a first room dedicated to descriptions of the discovery and the territory, which acts as a kind of reception room for visitors.

The excavations of the Hera Sanctuary were conducted for almost a century, in different phases, starting with the discovery by Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco, followed by the mid-century studies, and finally, the recent excava-

tions. The continuous explorations brought about a series of changes in the interpretations of some of the findings: for example, it is well known that the interpretation of the metopes, the reconstruction of their original meaning and the hypothesis related to their placement changed as the archaeological discoveries brought to light new pieces of the frieze and new data on the original measurements of the buildings of the sanctuary hypothetically related to the metopes. The whole research history of the sanctuary area is a complex report that is important to communicate to the public in order to show the evolution and the process of the construction of our knowledge of the past, but using a traditional display it is difficult to describe the development of the various steps, and for this reason a new approach was developed.

As a result, the room is equipped with two displays mounted side by side. Visitors listen to a voice telling the story of the excavations, while the two screens show a reconstruction of the first and the second phase of the excavation and present a review of the scientific archaeological data collected. In selected parts of the narration the two displays act as an extended monitor, to emphasize the transitions from one phase to the next by shifting screens. To complete the cognitive experience, a third display is placed on the floor, at the visitors' feet: while the narration goes on, it shows a movie that simulates the actual excavation, with the different layers of terrain removed step by step, and the discovery of the main finds. The various media used are synchronized in order to create a total information environment. In this way the room shows visitors simultaneously archaeological field work, the history and the reasons for the different excavations phases, and the process and difficulties in data interpretation as new information is discovered.

2nd case study: the fourth room. The Sanctuary: 3D models, the reliability issue

The **fourth room** aims at communicating to the public the history of the sanctuary throughout the different chronological phases of its existence. Today it is difficult for the visitor to imagine the sanctuary by visiting the archaeological site because the remains are not completely visible nor are they self-explanatory. A 3D model of the whole sanctuary was created and is presented to the public by a multimedia interactive totem equipped with 4 interacting points, that correspond to the four views of the sanctuary (North, South, East, West), and their changes in the various phases of frequentation of the place: a customized touch-keyboard makes it possible to switch to the different time-line steps. The 3D reconstruction presented is based on scientific data, both archaeological and palaeo-botanic. Indeed, the visitor is offered not only the possibility of seeing the reconstruction of various buildings but he can interact with the whole sanctuary, rebuilt with its sacred garden. The Hera garden plays an important role in the cult of the goddess, so it was important to describe the general appearance of the vegetation of the place when it was frequented. The palaeo-botanic analyses give exact information on the floral species represented in the sanctuary so it was possible to show a scientific reconstruction of the Foce Sele Hera Garden.

Furthermore the 3D model fulfils other requirements typical of modern trends in Virtual Archaeology: communication of different levels of reliability of the proposed reconstructions. The metaphor chosen to communicate uncertainty is the

Figs. 1-3 – The "Museo Narrante" of the Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary: 3D models and the fifth room.

transparent texture used for the walls of the buildings for which the reconstruction is not sure. In particular, new excavations demonstrated that the dimensions of the so-called Thesauròs do not fit the estimated measurements of the whole metope frieze, as had been supposed in the past without archaeological support. Furthermore, new data give no evidence of a ceiling or covering of the building. Consequently, the building traditionally indicated as "Thesauròs" (with a definition which was not considered definitive even by the first discoverers) is represented in the 3D model with a transparent texture, communicating uncertainty and at the same time somehow attracting the attention of visitors to its unfinished, ongoing and fascinating research history. In this room the informative environment is completed by other communication media as well: the history of the various hypotheses is described to visitors on panels, together with the related archaeological data on which they were based and proposed, in order to let people understand the process of reconstruction of the past and eventually inducing them to create their own opinion.

3rd case study: the fifth room. The metopes

The **fifth room** is dedicated to the Foce Sele metopes, parts of a frieze that has been reconstructed in various ways by scholars.

The archaeological reconstruction of the figurative complex has been discussed since the first discovery and further complicated by the subsequent finds of additional metopes in later excavations. The debate on the reconstruction of the so-called Thesauros and of the other buildings in the sanctuary, proposed because their decoration appears to be pertinent, creates a further difficulty in the final reconstruction of the original meaning and placement of the metopes. This intricate situation makes the exposition of a single reconstruction of the frieze something not only difficult, but, to some extent, scientifically wrong. Consequently, it was necessary to move on to a different method to communicate the information available on the metopes, by proposing a distinctive reading approach. First of all a semantic matrix was created, to analyse the different interpretations of the metopes according to 1- different scholars; 2- different mythological cycles. The semantic matrix was the methodological background for the proposal of a revolutionary exposition of the metopes, of their interpretations and of the history of their study.

The exposition focuses on casts of the metopes, made of a very light-weight material (it should be mentioned once again that the original metopes are displayed in the National Museum in a historical museological context, which is important in itself, so it was neither possible nor useful to move the original stone metopes from the traditional exhibition). The casts were suspended from the ceiling of an almost round room. Visitors stand at the centre of the room. At the beginning of the visit a voice starts to tell the stories of the mythological cycles represented by the metopes. Different spot-lights illuminate only the metopes that can be interpreted according to the particular myth that is being narrated. In this way, a metope can be illuminated as many times as the interpretations it has according to the different myths. Furthermore, a movie, synchronized with the voice and the spot-lights, enhances the narration, offering the visitor additional iconographic material to explain the myths being narrated.

The "Museo Narrante": a new concept of scientific communication. Can customized solutions be modular and exportable?

The solutions presented here share the concept of customizing an exhibition strategy to a specific archaeological problem to be communicated and, at the same time, to offer the visitors not only the results of scientific research but also the archaeological data and the reasoning on those data, in this way stimulating people to think about their past and to form their own opinions about it.

The experience gained during the few years of activity of the Museum shows a successful impact on the public, that encourages us to consider the possibility of applying the "Sele method" to other case studies. Even the exposition proposed here is conceived as ongoing and not definitive, as new solutions will be used to communicate new data as they are collected by the archaeologists conducting research at the Foce Sele Hera Sanctuary.

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