

CHOROGRAPHY — MEDIA MATERIALITIES

Gallery — [\[water pigment paper\]](#)

Working on my text accompaniment to the guide to Paul Noble's art work, on display currently at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, has had me reflecting again on just how we might describe an encounter, in this case with a world of the imagination, a curiously enigmatic cosmopolis.

(As an archaeologist I am constantly encountering places, but aren't they all so informed by the imaginary, both personal and cultural?)

While I chose a kind of glossary of an itinerary through Nobson (In Parenthesis [\[Link\]](#)), I have found it so appropriate to look again at the descriptive efforts of the English chorographers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — how curate John Wallis, my favorite, described the county of Northumberland in the 1750s and 60s, its natural history and antiquities, with an attitude and style intimately human, observant of local detail, and almost alchemical in its appreciation of the qualities of place and the physical environment.

Paul draws in pencil graphite on an epic scale of minute detail, and shared with me one of the figures of his own encounter with Nobson Newtown — Mefisty. Me — fist — Mephistopheles — Mefisty is the product of Paul's pact with graphite, laboring over drawings twenty feet high and as wide — labor that takes its toll on hand and wrist as graphite is manipulated into graphic form [\[Link\]](#).

This intimate engagement with an allotrope of carbon I find quite haunting — resonant too, of course, of all those mythical Promethean encounters with earth and clay.

For many years too I have been fascinated by another encounter with earth, clay and minerals — ceramics. I have documented this, and again the challenge of describing the ineffable, working in and on clay, but, frankly, with only limited success. My books and many papers on ancient Greek ceramics always seemed so wide of the mark —

when I was very aware of what went into the design and making. (And now, over the summer, Helen is downstairs in the studio, working on her extraordinary experiments in studio ceramic terra sigillata [\[Link\]](#).)

Add to this some recent reflections, reported in this blog, on form and substance, Aristotelian matters of **hylomorphism**, the way form emerges to make sense (this being another central topic of Paul's Nobson Newtown) [\[Link\]](#). And how to document, to describe ruin through photography – [\[Link\]](#).

I suggested that we might connect an experience, of encountering a site for example, with an expanded notion of the aesthetic (beyond the typical association of the word with the arts). It is only through situated experience that we encounter things. Thinking, sensing, feeling, evaluating – this is the aesthetic. This is how I understand Kant's transcendental aesthetic – that aesthetic elements are foundational for knowledge: only in space and time, that is through experience and intuition, can objects and places first be given to us [\[Link\]](#).

So I find myself returning to my earliest field experiences in the north east of England and my longest running project of offering a description of the English-Scottish borders from earliest times.



Photography, planning, mapping and other forms of graphical documentation have always been, for me, ways of working through such issues of documentation and description – photo work as much about photographic encounter as about the images produced. Planning and drawing because these direct attention. Attempts *to handle* the qualities of place and material artifact – quiddity and haecceity [\[Link\]](#).

This is less a matter of illustration, and more about the way setting up a photo (viewpoint, composition, color balance, contrast control, printing and surface), making marks (inkjet to technical pencil), manipulating pigment, is part of an encounter, a response perhaps, or a responsibility, even a calling.

Paul's graphite (and now marble and clay and more materials) and Helen's clays and oxides have shifted my attention to *water, pigment, paper* – any encounter with a landscape such as the English-Scottish borders needs to retrace the tracks of Romantic watercolorists.

And watercolor is precisely transparent – revealing every manipulation of pigment

and water on paper.

[Accent Arts](#), a fabulous supply store in Palo Alto, stocks a range of traditional pigment paints (Daniel Smith and Rublev) – remarkable materials, minerals and metal oxides and compounds that behave in very distinctive ways. Far from the definition of color we are so used to on screen (RGB percentages, whatever) or in print (CMYK et al).

How mark making is a design medium

– the practice defining the object. De-sign. How gesture, hand and instrument (brush, pen), maneuvering pigment in water upon a surface do not deliver representations or illustrations of anything in particular, though they are generated by close attention to both encounter and also the transformation/translation inherent in any kind of account or description.









Gallery – [water pigment paper]

ADD PATINA AND ENJOY

Out with the dogs this morning, circa 1876.



Ironic media inversion – add patina and enjoy as the past becomes the present.

More play with the iPhone app Camera Awesome.

PRESENCE AND AUTHENTICITY –

ROUTES TO CIVILITY

A perceptive item in the Guardian yesterday, from Simon Jenkins:

Welcome to the post-digital world, an exhilarating return to civility – via Facebook and Lady Gaga.

The point – our contemporary world is a mixed reality – witness the growing importance (again) of “live events”, even as we are more connected digitally:

A week in California and a finger in the recessionary wind has shown me where the smart money is moving. It is from online towards “live experience”.

The example of the music business is already well-known. Earnings from recordings have been plummeting for a decade, while from live they are rising ever faster. Warner Brothers release albums free online to publicise forthcoming concerts. In Britain HMV is closing 40 shops while tickets for a Rihanna concert can cost £330, and for Coldplay £180. A seat for Madonna is more expensive than her entire recorded output. A top American performer would reckon to earn between 80% and 90% of revenue from live performance. In the US alone, touring revenue that grossed \$1bn in 1995 rose to \$4.6bn last year. The big money, goes the catchphrase, “is now at the gate”. Nor is this just a

youth phenomenon. On the American music circuit, 96% of singers were reportedly over 40 and almost half were over 60.

The potency of experience extends far beyond the realm of music. The upsurge in live comedy began in the mid-90s with tours by Robert Newman and David Baddiel, but now has Michael McIntyre and others appearing weekly, with back-up teams that would staff a circus. Performers such as Stephen Fry have taken to reading their books in public, Dickens-style, and simulcasting to hundreds of local cinemas. Close to a million people worldwide watch the Met Opera live in cinemas.

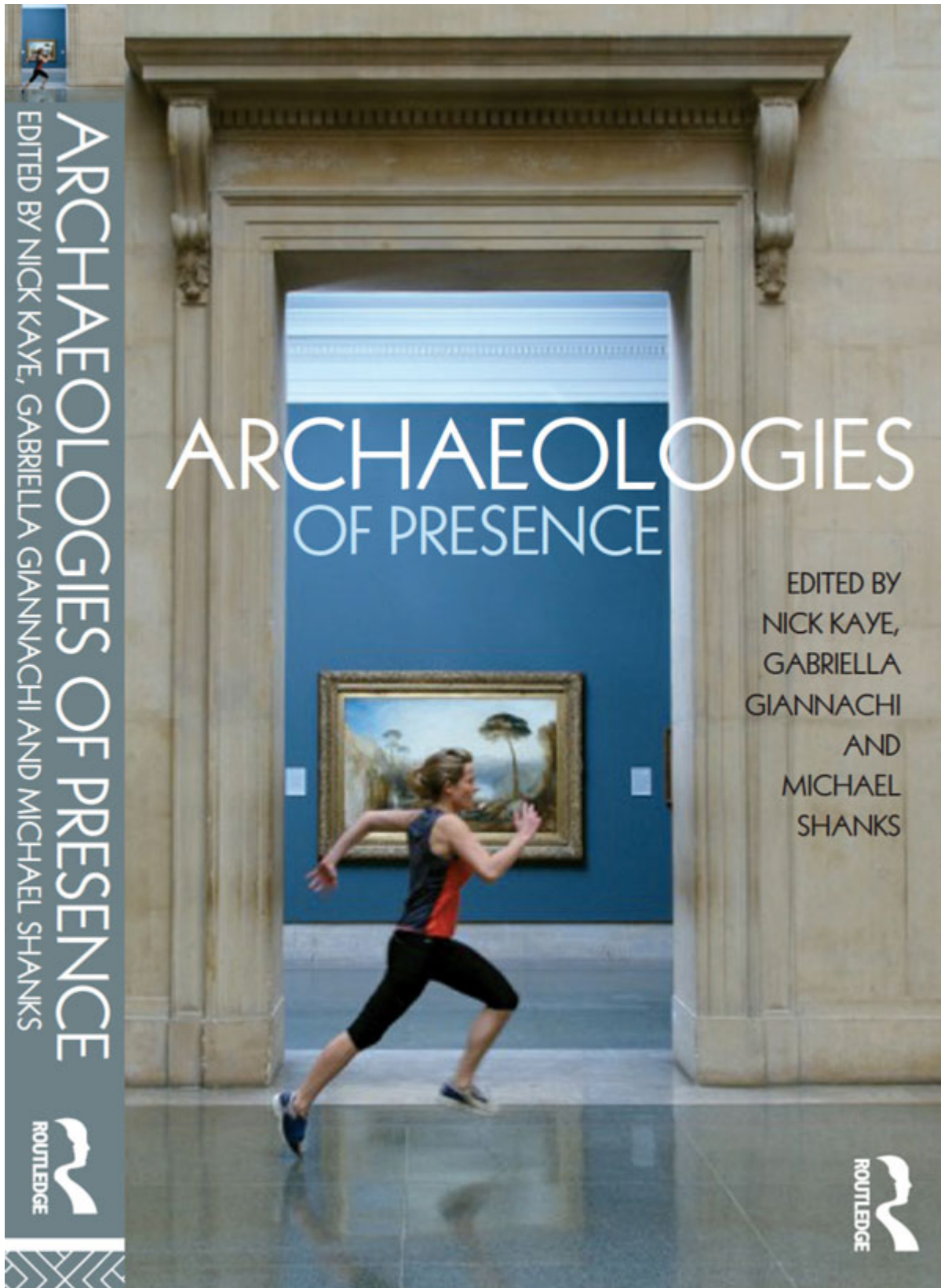
The most carefully researched audience activity, American politics, has swung from advertising and staged events to the archaic political form of active debate. The Republican primary campaign has seen 23 debates, winning unprecedented television audiences of 5-6 million ...

The issue is the convergence of authenticity and mediation in what Joe Pine calls the experience economy. People matter in the world of (industrial) design and cultural production in a way that we haven't seen for a long while. As I was recently commenting [\[link\]](#), the values at the heart of this human-centered design ultimately come down to relationships between people, their artifacts, and, crucially, both in the context of what Jenkins calls "civility". (Recall the

etymology – this is the world of the *civis*, the citizen – what I am calling *res publica*.)

Jenkins only comments on the significance of authenticity, of presence, of liveness. He doesn't delve into the workings. A forthcoming book edited with Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye does just this kind of exploration with some performance artists and academics.

Presence, trace, record, media, document, archive ... it is one of the culminations of our five year long [“presence project”](#):



ARCHAEOLOGIES OF PRESENCE

EDITED BY
NICK KAYE,
GABRIELLA
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[\[Link\]](#) – Amazon

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

A nice development from one of our [classes in the d.school](#) – a company set up to help people tell stories about their lives.

Here is a write-up in Fast Company – [Storytree Wants Families To Spin, Share, And Save Good Yarns](#).

[Storytree: Remember the Time](#) from [StoryTree](#) on [Vimeo](#).

INNOVATION JOURNALISM: PERFORMANCE AND CURATION

Conference at Stanford – Innovation Journalism 2011

A panel discussion with Marisa Gallagher of CNN. The topic was the future of journalism and the place of narrative. [Mobile Media Design – Is the Medium Still the Message?](#).

The contemporary crisis in journalism is simple. With everyone able to witness and publish their experiences of newsworthy events, what role is there for the skilled, and expensive, journalist who is likely not present at the event?

Marisa showed us CNN's superb new project – *Open Stories* – where anyone can make their own (online digital) contribution to an ongoing news event. [\[Link\]](#)



The role of the (CNN) journalist is here to

curate content.

I reiterated my now well-worn distinction between narrative and storytelling, where narrative is the *structure* or *grammar* of character, plot and event, and

storytelling is the performance of narrative.

Storytelling – the articulation of performer/storyteller, place/event, audience/commentators, where narrative structure is (potentially) adapted to suit the particular performance. Storytelling can accommodate deep critique of the familiar formulaic frames that we all know so well and which shut down our appreciation of the unique human experience of place and event.

The (future) journalist – enabling, curating such performative events.

FARO – HERITAGE FUTURES



VLAAMS STEUNPUNT VOOR CULTUREEL ERFGOED

Faro – (Spanish, Italian, Portuguese) – lighthouse (after the Pharos of Alexandria, with its cultural beacons – the Library and Museum).



Faro, Portugal – The European Convention of Faro: Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) – [\[Link\]](#).

FARO – the NGO cultural agency/consultancy in Flanders dedicated to promoting cultural heritage within the spirit and terms of the FARO convention.

Faro – an extraordinary sweetened and quintessentially Belgian ale based upon spontaneously fermented lambic.

I am back after a visit to Brussels and Tongeren (Limburg, Flanders, or technically, the Flemish Community) exploring **the future of heritage** – that powerful and contentious notion of cultural legacy.

Questions about the role of the past in the present, what to do with historical and archaeological sources and sites, museum collections, and especially in this part

of the world, questions of the links between nation state and people, the region and “Europe”. Policy and agendas in this most important of cultural fields.

I was with FARO, the agency in the Flemish Community charged with integrating cultural heritage policy, stimulating qualitative management, long term sustainability and the unlocking of the cultural heritage. FARO is at the heart of a network of cultural heritage organizations designed to cultivate, to represent, to acknowledge and to valorise the different ways the public participates in and experiences cultural heritage. Under Marc Jacobs they are doing a superb job across several hundred museums organizations, local history societies, community groups. I heard about a year of events organized around the notion of “the fake”, a massive regional assessment of just what “heritage” is in the Flemish Community, managed through a new and open online database, plans for the annual week of taste – celebrations of cuisine and locality.

In particular FARO looks to implement the Council of Europe’s Faro Convention of 2005, as its name suggests. This is human-centered heritage (as distinct from focused upon sites and collections), participatory, dynamic and negotiated, with cultural values and memory practices at the heart of quality of life and sustainable society, that is, looking forward as much as back. My long-standing argument that archaeology is as much about the future as the past.

For my part, I talked about [the archaeological imagination](#), [animating the archive](#), and ways of [cocreating cultural heritage](#).

This was the first time I encountered the detail of the Faro Convention. It is quite a visionary document, very much worth sharing and discussion.

Not a long document: here are the highlights, as I see them.

Preamble

Recognising the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and crossdisciplinary concept of cultural heritage;

Emphasising the value and potential of cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society;

Recognising that every person has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice, while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, as an aspect of the right freely to participate in cultural life enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and guaranteed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);

Convinced of the need to involve everyone in society in the ongoing process of defining and managing cultural heritage;

...

Article 1 Aims

c. emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal;

d. take the necessary steps to apply the provisions of this Convention concerning:

– the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society, and in the processes of sustainable development and the promotion of cultural diversity;

Article 2 Definitions

a. cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time;

Article 3 refers to different forms of cultural heritage that together constitute a shared source of **remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity**.

Article 5 – Cultural heritage law and policies

The Parties undertake to:

- a. recognize public interest, enhancing value through identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation;
- c. ensure, in the specific context of each Party, that legislative provisions exist for exercising the right to cultural heritage as defined in Article 4;
- d. foster an economic and social climate which supports participation in cultural heritage activities;
- e. promote cultural heritage protection as a central factor in the mutually supporting objectives of sustainable development, cultural diversity and contemporary creativity;

Section II – Contribution of cultural heritage to society and human development

Article 7 – Cultural heritage and dialogue

The Parties undertake, through the public authorities and other competent bodies, to:

- a. encourage reflection on the ethics and methods of

presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations;

d. integrate these approaches into all aspects of lifelong education and training.

Article 8 – Environment, heritage and quality of life

Here is recognition of the complementarity of cultural, biological, geological and landscape diversity

and 8c refers to the importance of “place”

Article 9 is about sustainability – cultural heritage as an essential component of change

d. ... promote the use of materials, techniques and skills based on tradition, and explore their potential for contemporary applications;

Section III – Shared responsibility for cultural heritage and public participation

This section is about the importance of participation and access, especially among young people – including encouraging constructive criticism of policy.

Article 13 – Cultural heritage and knowledge

- a. facilitate the inclusion of the cultural heritage dimension at all levels of education, not necessarily as a subject of study in its own right, but as a fertile source for studies in other subjects;
- b. strengthen the link between cultural heritage education and vocational training;
- c. encourage interdisciplinary research on cultural heritage, heritage communities, the environment and their inter-relationship;

Article 14 – Cultural heritage and the information society

The Parties undertake to develop the use of digital technology to enhance access to cultural heritage and the benefits which derive from it, by:

- a. encouraging initiatives which promote the quality of contents and endeavour to secure diversity of languages and cultures in the information society;

This begs development of participatory, collaborative and social software and

networks.

Implementation?

Broad and visionary, yes, with questions immediately raised of implementation. That's what we are trying in the Binchester project, and this is what I talked about at Tongeren, with a group of heritage managers and academics at the Gallo-Romeins Museum [\[Link\]](#) and [\[Link\]](#).