

## CHAPTER 4

### MAKING SENSE OF THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION

Robin Skeates

*Robin Skeates is a leading Central Mediterranean prehistorian and a specialist in museum and heritage studies. He is a Reader at Durham University, UK. In this chapter, he draws upon both dimensions of his work to evaluate changes in the representation of prehistoric Malta over the last three-and-a-half centuries. He begins by questioning the visual emphasis of most studies of archaeological representation, arguing instead that systems of representation often incorporate a wide variety of multi-sensory signifying practices and media. This theme is then explored through the example of Malta, historic representations of whose prehistoric remains are shown to have been dominated by the visual culture of outsiders, in contrast to recent representations, which have begun to acknowledge the significance of all the senses in past and present experiences and understandings of prehistoric Malta.*

#### **Representation**

‘Representation’ is one of the key cultural practices through which meanings are produced and exchanged (e.g. Hall 1997; Giles and Middleton 2008). Culturally-defined systems of representation incorporate a wide variety of signifying practices and media. The broadly

shared meanings encoded in these expressive forms are made sense of and connected by the social practice of discourse. Through this, dominant conventions, meanings, ideologies, and power relations can be accepted, negotiated, or opposed. Who represents whom, what, where, and how determines the representations available for us. But precisely how we interpret them (especially in terms of what they mean to our personal identities, emotions, and attachments) depends upon the realities being represented and upon our own histories, our social positions, and the ways in which we understand the world.

Social scientists have paid close attention to such signifying practices, moving away from a traditional scholarly concern with 'high' culture to a growing concern with contemporary popular culture. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have, for example, taken a critical interest in museums, in their objects, texts, and images displayed and juxtaposed in space, which signify meanings about the past and present. In particular, attention has been focussed on the 'poetics' (practices) and 'politics' (effects and consequences) of representing 'other' cultures in museums, and on the identities and power relations established through such systems of representation between the exhibitors and the exhibited (e.g. Hallam and Street 2000; Karp and Lavine 1991; Simpson 1996).

Archaeologists and art historians have also evaluated the representations developed in and around archaeology. As in the wider field of cultural studies, attention has broadened out: from a long-standing interest in the history of archaeological discoveries and in the changing conventions used in the depiction and display of ancient monuments and archaeological artefacts (e.g. Daniel 1950; Piggott 1978); to an increasingly critical concern with the history of archaeological practice, thought, text, and terminology (e.g. Gathercole and Lowenthal eds. 1990; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Trigger 1989); to museum displays and archaeological

site presentations (e.g. McManus 1996; Merriman 1999); to antiquarian and more recent archaeological images (e.g. Lyons *et al.* 2005; Molyneaux 1997; Moser 1998; Myrone and Peltz 1999; Shanks 1997; Smiles 1994; Smiles and Moser 2005); to archaeology's image in contemporary society, seen across a variety of media (e.g. Clack and Brittain 2007).

The 'ways of seeing' or visual conventions of archaeology have received particular attention. Following the lead of art historians (e.g. Berger 1972), a key critique has been that visual representations used to record and reconstruct archaeological remains are never innocent providers of information (Moser and Smiles 2005). Instead, they must be evaluated as artificial technologies and as representational strategies used to shape meanings and construct knowledge in particular cultural contexts. For example, Andy Jones (2001) argues that the learnt conventions of archaeological artefact illustration, which translate the form of artefacts from three dimensions into two and standardize them, must be understood in relation to the broader historical development of scientific illustration. James Phillips (2005) demonstrates how the reconstructed scenes of everyday life at the Iron Age Glastonbury Lake Village, published in 1911 in *The Illustrated London News*, promoted an image of a well-ordered civilized society at a time of social tensions in Edwardian Britain, in contrast to earlier images of savage ancient Britons. Sudeshna Guha points out that, in many nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs of the Archaeological Survey of India, local Indians were strategically placed as scales against ruined buildings being restored by the Imperial Survey, and that such images became a powerful colonial signifier of a civilization in decay being restored by the British (Guha 2002). Cornelius Holtorf (2007) also considers how archaeologists, in choosing what to wear, have made conventional fashion statements about who they are as archaeologists: ranging from scruffy diggers to professionals with health-and-safety conscious hard-hats and luminescent tabards or managerial suits.

This emphasis on the visual has led some archaeologists to equate representation in archaeology with ‘ways of seeing the past’ (Evans 2000: 347) or ‘the production of meaning through a visual language of communicating the past’ (Moser 2001: 266). But systems of representation often incorporate a wide variety of multi-sensory signifying practices and media. These include forms of speech, sound, performance, writing, visual images, material culture (such as clothing), body language and facial expressions, tastes, and aromas. In other words, people make sense of the world and communicate information about it with the help of representations that often appeal to more than just one of the senses.

The effectiveness of museum communication, in particular, has been much improved in recent years by scholars and practitioners who have learnt this lesson (e.g. Classen and Howes 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 1994; Howes and Classen 1991; Pye 2007; Shanks and Tilley 1987). They have criticized traditional museum ‘displays’ for their primarily visual aesthetic and their ambience of sensory restraint, summed up by the well known regulation to ‘look but not touch’. They have also encouraged the development of close, active, and more subjective visitor experiences that appeal to all the senses and encourage learning through doing.

‘Hands-on’ activities in archaeology exhibitions, for example, involve visitors touching either genuine archaeological objects or replicas, with the intention of encouraging those visitors to use all their senses to analyze those objects and associated ideas (Owen 1999), albeit within the increasingly severe constraints of health and safety regulations.

This has significant implications for studies of the history of archaeological representation, which can likewise be criticized for taking the senses for granted and privileging the visual. One partial exception is a paper by Ola Jensen (2000), which proposes that changing attitudes

towards prehistoric antiquities in Northern Europe at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were primarily due to changing attitudes towards the human body at that time. But, histories of Maltese archaeology, upon which this chapter concentrates, are, with the exception of a paper by Reuben Grima (1998), much less theorized and more visualist (e.g. Blondy 2001; Evans 1971; Grima 2004; Mayrhofer 1996; Vella 2004). They have paid particular attention to early drawings and photographs of the Islands' ancient monuments: valuing them especially as historic records of the appearance of those sites before and after their archaeological clearance and reconstruction, while occasionally questioning the accuracy of their representations. But these images, together with a wide variety of written documents, also offer the potential to be re-evaluated as culturally-determined forms of representation, which provide a wealth of information about the changing representational conventions, politics, and sensory perceptions of their creators.

The purpose of this chapter is, then, to undertake a kind of literary and art criticism of historic and contemporary representations of prehistoric Malta, with particular reference to the senses, in order to chart, historicize, and contextualize the sensory experiences and perceptions that have surrounded the development of archaeology in Malta over the last four centuries.<sup>1</sup> In other words, it considers how different generations of antiquarians and archaeologists have represented or denied the senses in the texts and images that describe their experiences and understandings of the landscape, inhabitants, and prehistoric antiquities of the Maltese Islands.

### ***Malta Illustrata: the mid-seventeenth century***

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a more extensive analysis (see Skeates 2010).

From the mid-seventeenth century, the material remains of Maltese prehistory were assigned to two contrasting sensory orders: one oral, the other literary. This is exemplified by the work of Giovanni Francesco Abela (1582-1655), a man of Maltese origin, who became Vice-Chancellor of the Order of St John, which administered the Maltese Islands at this time. Abela is widely credited as the first person to have explicitly mentioned the prehistoric remains of the Maltese Islands in print, in his book on the history and culture of Malta: *Malta Illustrata* (Abela 1647). He describes, for example, the ruins of the megalithic temple of Hagar Qim on Malta, and two groups of megaliths at Xewkija and L-Għejjun on Gozo. Above all, Abela emphasizes the gigantic size of these remains, even providing measurements of some of the stones. He ascribed these remains to the first inhabitants of Malta, whom he understood to have been a race of giants, living after the Flood and before the arrival of the Phoenicians, many thousands of years ago. He also noted the damage sustained by the megaliths due to the combined impact of time and peasants.

In terms of the senses, Abela's description of these antiquities marks a transition from an oral to a visual and especially literary form of remembering history, determined by the new representational medium of printing. On the one hand, he systematically recorded the spoken, traditional, Arab-influenced, Maltese place-names where each group of antiquities had been found. On the other hand, his project was primarily a textual and artistic one, intended to describe and illustrate—in the Italian language—the history of Malta. In this way, Malta's megalithic monuments began to be incorporated within the poetics and politics of a visual and literary form of European history, access to which was restricted to Italian and Latin speaking members of the educated and land-owning elite.

***Voyage Pittoresque: the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries***

From the 1770s, Abela's book was increasingly superseded by a new and popular genre of 'picturesque' travel book that selectively recorded travellers' personal experiences of the Islands, perceived through the filter of their classical and romantic ways of thinking and seeing. This was a time of growing French interest in Malta. Politically, they had long nurtured hopes of occupying the strategically situated islands, and, in 1798, they briefly succeed in doing so, when Napoleon Bonaparte, on his way to Egypt, expelled the Order of St. John from Malta and established it as a colony of the French Republic.

It was in this context that Jean-Pierre Hoüel (1735-1813), the eminent French artist, published the first visual representations of the Maltese prehistoric monuments in the fourth volume of his *Voyage Pittoresque des Isles de Sicilie, de Malte, et de Lipari* (Hoüel 1782-7). This travelogue of Hoüel's 'picturesque voyage' includes engraved illustrations and written descriptions of the ruined temple of Hagar Qim on Malta and of the megalithic 'Tour des Géants' (Ġgantija) and 'Edifice antique' (Xaghra Circle) on Gozo, which he rightly believed to be of 'high antiquity'.

Hoüel was engraver to King Louis XVI of France, and, under the King's patronage, toured the islands of Sicily, Lipari and Malta, stopping to make sketches and paintings of various places in the landscape. On his return to Paris, he exhibited several of his watercolours at the Salon. He later published copies of these images as engravings printed in his travel book, whose text and illustrations clearly reflect his artistic eye and way of seeing. Hoüel's engraving of 'Tadarnadur Isrira' (Hagar Qim), for example, shows three groups of men

communicating, through words and excited gestures, information about their new discoveries of artefacts at the site of the ruined monument (Figure 1). In the foreground, for instance, a man, perhaps representing Hoüel or his guide sits on the sparsely vegetated rocky ground, apparently interrupted in his sketching of the ruins by another man crouching down and pointing at the drawing.

Archaeologists have previously valued Hoüel's images and descriptions as records of the appearance of the prehistoric sites prior to their excavation (e.g. Evans 1971; Mayrhofer 1995). However, from a sensory perspective, they also provide some indication of two new experiential dimensions of the Maltese monuments that contemporary British visitors did not record, however staged and conventionalized the scenes may be. On one level, they represent the grand tourists' and their local assistants' full-bodied excitement at exploring the megaliths and discovering artefacts around them. On another level, they helped to promote a romantically picturesque view of the Maltese landscape, including its ancient monuments, natural phenomena, and costumed inhabitants, as sights to be viewed, illustrated, and appreciated aesthetically, especially with the benefit of Northern European classical scholarship.

### **Druidical remains discovered: 1800-1864**

Following the surrender of the French garrison in Valletta to Horatio Nelson in 1800, Malta became a strategically important base in the Central Mediterranean for the Royal Navy, and, as a Crown Colony from 1813, the Islands were ruled by a succession of British military Governors. In this context, the Maltese Islands' best-known 'rude stone monuments' came to

be experienced and perceived in a more full-bodied manner by a greater number and variety of people. A key part was played by senior members of the British military stationed in the Islands, and their distinguished European visitors whom they played host to. Together, they belonged to a close-knit and communicative network, based upon military rank, social class, classical education, and male gender. Some directed the excavation, surveying, and publication of the ancient sites' architecture and art, using techniques and resources already employed in the military defence and control of the Islands. Others enjoyed walking through, inspecting, discussing, and appreciating the form and construction of the freshly exposed buildings, making new small-scale discoveries in them, resting in their shade, speculating on their original barbarous uses, and engraving their initials and dates on the stones for others to see. But mostly they avoided getting their hands dirty. Their work was mainly done by secretaries, artists, servicemen, slaves, convicts, and local labourers, all of whom were put to work on the ruins. These men physically dug, surveyed, and sketched the remains. They also recorded their masters' views, which focussed increasingly on the ancient architecture and art, and consequently detached the ruins from their contemporary landscape settings. In opportune circumstances, these experiences were then converted into primarily visual, written, and illustrated reports. These were published and re-printed, either as scientific papers submitted to antiquarian and archaeological institutions in the capital cities of London and Paris, or as components of travel diaries or geography books marketed to more widely dispersed members of polite society. Local landowners and peasants were largely excluded from this process, marginalized by language, custom, and, above all, by colonial politics. However, they consciously observed or ignored the outsiders' visits to the known and named places that formed an integral part of their familiar cultural landscape. A few collaborated with the foreigners as oral guides, coachmen, and labourers. But others refused them access

to their property and even destroyed the stones, to avoid their valuable land from being appropriated.

A good example is provided by Richard Temple (1776-1839), Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, who visited the Xaghra monuments in June 1828, at the start of a two-day visit to Gozo. For the Duke, this visit comprised a small but noteworthy chapter in his two-year grand yacht tour of the Mediterranean. Aspects of his sensory perceptions and experiences of the monuments are recorded in his private diary (Temple 1862: 94-8).

Having gone ashore at nine o'clock, the Duke's party was conveyed over a distance of about four miles, by vehicle then donkey, to 'the Giant's House', where he saw the (Xaghra) 'enclosure' and the two (Ġgantija) 'temples' (p. 95). Here, his diary records 'passing some hours in examining these ruins' (p. 98). His account was probably informed by Major Bayley, the Governor of Gozo, who appears to have accompanied the Duke through his visit to the island. Notes were probably taken down on the spot by the Duke's private secretary, Wilcox, and later tidied up. The published text focuses on the form, dimensions, construction, and carved decoration, age, and use of the 'Cyclopean architecture'. But the Duke's engagement with the ruins was not only visual and conceptual, for their recent clearance by Otto Bayer (Bayey's predecessor as Governor of Gozo) and James Somerville afforded new physical experiences of them. In particular, the cleared architecture guided his movement through the successive spaces. At the end of the day, the Duke retired to his boat, 'exhausted by heat and covered by dust' (p. 99).

The Duke also commissioned the Valletta-based German artist, Charles de Brocktorff, to produce a 'Series of Twenty-One Drawings of the Druidical Remains Discovered on the

Island of Gozo'. These were later published in London (de Brocktorff 1849; Grima 2004). The coloured drawings were based on inked-up pencil sketches drawn 'on the spot' by de Brocktorff, between 1828 and 1829. The majority are of the 'Giant's Tower' (Ġgantija temples), and of the site of the 'two large stone pillars' (Xaghra Circle) (Figure 2). For archaeologists, these drawings are of particular interest as records of the appearance of the monuments, prior to their complete clearance and restoration (Grima 2004). But from a sensory perspective, the views and captions also provide a record of de Brocktorff's perception of the monuments. They show that he was primarily interested in recording, in detail, the form, size, and colour of the stone architecture of the ruined temples. That their measured dimensions were important to him is highlighted in two drawings, which have key measurements written over the drawings, in addition to being reiterated in their captions. In addition, the inclusion of human figures in each of de Brocktorff's views provides us, from a political angle, with evidence of the 'iconography of domination' in nineteenth century depictions of Malta (Sant Cassia 1993), and, from a related sensory dimension, with a fascinating insight into his observation, stereotyping, and staging of the physical appearance and behaviour of different classes of person in and around the ruins.

The principal figures are 'cosmopolitan, educated and affluent' European visitors (Grima 1998: 37), comprising officers in brightly coloured uniforms and gentlemen in civilian clothes. They usually carry a parasol, musket, or stick, which they sometimes use to point to, or reach out and touch, particular features of the monument. (It is almost as if to touch the stones directly would soil their hands, like those of socially inferior manual labourers.) The visitors are generally depicted in pairs. The majority are shown walking through, inspecting, and discussing the ruins. Many are receiving information from a uniformed guide, while a few are being shown freshly discovered artefacts by local workmen. One figure, wearing a

straw hat and a blue jacket, possibly intended by de Brocktorff as a self-portrait, is repeatedly shown sketching the ruins, often with a portfolio and pencil case and accompanied by a guide. Another figure is directing the measuring of the megaliths. A few gentlemen are also shown standing on top of the highest walls, resting on and around the ruins, or admiring the view from them. In three cases, they have evidently visited the ruins, with a dog and a musket, during the course of hunting excursions.

A second category of visitor comprises individual British servicemen working for these gentlemen. One type of serviceman, wearing a blue tunic and white or blue-striped trousers, is commonly depicted as a single individual standing, kneeling, sitting, or lying on the highest stones, usually measuring their height above the ground with a plumb-line. In one case, a serviceman is kneeling, holding out his left hand to two gentlemen to show them an object that he has just dug from a small hole in the ground, which he points to with his right hand. A somewhat different type of serviceman, wearing a more varied uniform and often carrying of a gun, stick, or umbrella, is depicted guiding the gentlemen and officers in and around the ruins, pointing out particular features.

A third category comprises the 'native' Maltese islanders, differentiated from these visitors by their picturesque traditional costumes, often bare feet, and their apparent ignorance of the monuments. They are generally male, and appear in pairs or alone, engaged in a variety of activities: observing the visitors whilst resting and sometimes smoking on the edge of the monuments while their goats browse nearby; working the soil of adjacent fields with mattocks; resting on the edge of the excavated area with their pickaxes or in the shade of the megalithic walls; or, in the case of a woman, walking whilst carrying a vessel on her head and holding a child with one hand. A slightly different character, wearing a red head-scarf,

blue trousers, and a coloured tunic, reappears in a number of the scenes, talking to the gentlemen and officers and acting as a guide to the ruins or their hunting. In the scene showing the continuing 1829 excavation of the Xaghra Circle, he is also emerging from an underground cave holding out to two gentlemen what appears to be a human skull.

### **Excavations in Malta: 1865-1939**

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, Britain's colonial control of Malta was strengthened due to her strategic importance as a fortress in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, studies of the prehistoric and modern populations of the Maltese Islands were extended: by new geological and ethnological research, by new archaeological techniques and discoveries, and by new technologies of visual representation. Maltese scholars played a more prominent part in this process, particularly as members of the new Malta Historical and Scientific Society, established in 1865 (Vella and Gilkes 2001: 354). Scholarly publications of this period show that archaeologists continued to prioritize their sense of sight, which was variously coloured by their aesthetics, their politics, and by their critical attitudes towards old and new techniques of archaeological illustration. Some of them also learnt to use their sense of touch to excavate and classify prehistoric objects with greater care, with different types of archaeological touch being ordered socially. Professor Tagliaferro even used his nose to make sense of some of his finds from a human burial site. But, in general, the senses of archaeologists were kept under control, with most expressions of emotion being socially avoided or criticized as unscientific. In turn, growing numbers of visitors consumed what was

presented to them at officially designated archaeological sites and museums and in archaeological publications as increasingly visual experiences.

The prehistoric remains uncovered during archaeological excavations were usually published with a large number of illustrations, produced using contemporary techniques of visual representation and reproduction. These included line-drawings of artefacts, site plans, and sections, site location maps, and a growing number of photographs, whose status as archaeological representations were actively discussed. For example, the maps, plans, plates, and figures in Themistocles Zammit's (1930) *Prehistoric Malta: The Tarxien Temples* were commended by most reviewers, with the exception of Wilfrid Hemp, Secretary of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire, who criticised them in detail:

Many of the photographs are not worthy of their subjects and do not compare favourably with those published in *ANTIQUITY* in March 1930: e.g. plate III, fig. 3, which has been so badly touched up as to destroy its value as a record. The plan is inserted in such a way as to make its use as inconvenient as possible and it is on much too small a scale. It is made more confusing by the use of outline only to indicate both paving and 'vertical stones', while 'horizontal' stones (sometimes used as paving) are shaded. The position of 'small court J' (p. 19) is not indicated. The maps on pp. 2 and 3 are on the same scale, and contain practically the same information, but contradict each other in detail ...

(Hemp 1931: 139) (Figure 3)

Other archaeological publications of this era reveal that the physical acts of excavating and ordering the finds involved a socially-determined hierarchy of sight and touch, presided over

by the excavation supervisor. For example, Gertrude Caton-Thompson, an assistant to Professor Margeret Murray of the University of London, in her published report on the excavations at Għar Dalam, assured her readers that,

The factor of human oversight was guarded against as far as possible. A keen-eyed lad worked over each basket load as it was emptied upon the table, breaking up the clay nodules, sorting out the sherds and bones. From him it passed across the table to me and to a second man, handful by handful, and was subjected to the closest scrutiny before final removal to the dump heap near the entrance.

(Murray 1925: 1-2)

Professor Napoleon Tagliaferro (1857-1939), a mathematician at the University of Malta, also undertook 'scientific research' on the 'ossiferous caves and fissures' of the Maltese Islands (Tagliaferro 1915): work that evidently stimulated more than his sense of sight. During the excavation of prehistoric burials at Bur-Mgħez, for example, Tagliaferro's keen but scientifically-informed sense of smell was put to the test by the stones that surrounded the human remains:

It was only natural that these porous pebbles should absorb the liquids and gases arising out of the decomposition of the bodies with which they were in contact. What is, however, remarkable is the variety of the odours which these stones give out when erased or broken after so many thousand years. Besides the bad smells of putrefaction or of decaying matter, others of a quite different nature were easily distinguishable, as those of fresh flesh, fresh vegetables, and particularly of violets.

(Tagliaferro 1911: 150)

### ***The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: 1940-1973***

Soon after a request made in 1936 from Gerald Clauson at the Colonial Office to Courtenay Raleigh-Radford, the new Director of the British School at Rome, to ‘do something on a bigger scale’ in Malta (Vella and Gilkes 2001: 372), probably in response to the threat to the British colonial interest in Maltese archaeology posed by research funded by the Italian Fascist party (Pessina and Vella 2005), the University of Malta was awarded a grant by the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies to put into effect plans for a detailed re-examination of the Maltese prehistoric monuments and museum collections that would help the colonial authorities impose greater administrative and chronological order on the numerous antiquities of the Islands (Evans 1971). The Committee formed to administer the spending of this grant invited Dr. John Evans, a Research Fellow of Pembroke College at Cambridge University, to co-ordinate this Survey and to catalogue the prehistoric material. Based at the Valletta Museum, Evans undertook a range of tasks, including stylistic classification, cataloguing, architectural surveying, stratigraphic excavation, restoration, and museum display, most of which unconsciously prioritized the sense of sight and related technologies of visual recording and representation. Evans even broadcast a popular lecture on the Maltese temples and Survey on the BBC’s Third Programme (now Radio 3). This was an evening service that aimed to broadcast the very best of high culture to ‘high brow’ listeners in order to contribute to ‘the refinement of society’. The lecture was then published in *The Listener*. It emphasized the visual impact of the temples and of their associated artefacts as, ‘amazing artistic and architectural achievements’ (Evans 1954: 130). However, in 1955, Evans was appointed to the Chair of Prehistoric European Archaeology at the

University of London's Institute of Archaeology. As a consequence, the Survey effectively came to an end, and its final publication was delayed until 1971.

*The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands* (Evans 1971) consisted of detailed descriptions of all the known prehistoric sites, and of the excavation work done on them, together with illustrated catalogues of the objects found in them, and culminated in a section on 'cultures and chronology'. Being based upon the Survey that Evans had undertaken in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as well as on Albert Mayr's early twentieth century descriptions of the major temples, it is not entirely surprising that it received a stinging review by the American 'New Archaeologist', Daniel Evett (1973). In line with his aggressively positivist philosophical stance, Evett argued that, 'the lack of theoretical direction renders the book systematically frustrating' (Evett 1973: 72). He also criticized Evans' visual emphasis with the statement that, 'Perhaps this volume, with its bountiful pictorial materials, will find a warmer reception in the hands of certain art historians.' (*ibid.*: 73). This outspoken review, combined with the establishment of the fully independent Republic of Malta in 1974, effectively sounded the death-knell for traditional, colonial, culture-historical, and visualist British archaeology in Malta, although traces of it remain to this day.

### **Heritage Malta: 1974 to the present**

Since full independence in 1974, the sensory values of Malta's prehistoric heritage have been reinvented by a wide variety of social groups, the interests of which have proven to be both complementary and conflicting (Rountree 1999). Sight has continued to be strongly emphasized by many of them interested in protecting, managing, celebrating, and interpreting

the appearance of the ancient architectural and artistic heritage of Malta. The highly visible defacing of Malta's temples has also been used by vengeful bird hunters excluded from these sites. But, increasingly, the significance of other senses has been conceded. Empathy with prehistoric persons and their multi-sensory experiences of moving through and encountering the different spaces of the prehistoric monuments of Malta have been embraced by both goddess pilgrims and archaeological theorists, some of whom have been given special access to these sites by heritage managers. Sound, in particular, has been recognized and recreated by members of these two groups, and especially by contemporary musicians, as a significant element in the ritual experience of the monuments. Touch has recently been acknowledged by archaeological site managers as an important sense, especially for young learners, through their creation of new hands-on interactive exhibits and creative activities, as well as by social archaeologists considering both the ritual use of prehistoric artworks and their own physical experiences of working in Malta. Taste and smell have also been noted by social archaeologists.

Hal Saflieni Hypogeum has become a key site for the expression of this diversity of interests. The process of restoring this site began in earnest in 1981, with the launching by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of a 'Campaign for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in Malta'. A leading advocate was the Maltese architect, Richard England (1981). He pointed out that the Hypogeum was decaying and argued that restoration was urgently required, with the promise that 'Restoration would then allow the exploration of a unique prehistoric monument as originally set out and conceived by its designers and architects on these islands' (England 1981: 6). Environmental studies between 1986 and 1991 then identified the causes of the decay (Pace 2000). The growth of algae and lichen was traced to the artificial lights used to illuminate the monument and to

moisture leaking from overlying water or sewage pipes, while the fading of the wall paintings was linked to the carbon dioxide exhaled by an estimated 74,000 visitors in 1987, which combined with water to form a weak acid that attacked the limestone walls. In response, between 1991 and 1996, a highly controlled environment and visitor regime was established in the Hypogeum. The entrance was enclosed in a glass and steel box with an air-lock chamber to create a buffer zone that enables control of the site's microclimate (Figure 4). A computer-controlled lighting system was installed. Raised walkways with handrails were constructed to control the movement of visitors and ensure their safety. A limit of 300 visitors per day and a group size of no more than ten individuals were also imposed to keep carbon dioxide levels low. The site is now managed by Heritage Malta, a national agency established in 2003 under the terms of the new *Cultural Heritage Act*, with a strategic emphasis on education, accessibility, and tourist income generation (Rose 2004). In this way the artistic and architectural heritage of Ħal Saflieni has been successfully protected and promoted, in line with the worthy ideals of the new legislation and of UNESCO, but at the cost of access to the site's original multi-sensory environment. Although a visit to the Hypogeum remains far from senseless, it is also possible to feel that, in addition to the 'visual intrusion' of the walkway acknowledged by the site's curator (Martin 1999: 34), ones other senses have been dulled by yet another packaged heritage experience.

Despite this, Ħal Saflieni remains a key place of pilgrimage for goddess scholars and their goddess tours of Malta. They effectively fill some of the gaps left by more interpretatively cautious archaeologists by offering one of the most sensuous approaches to prehistoric Malta. The anthropologist, Kathryn Rountree (1999), characterizes the members of this group as foreign women, belonging to the predominantly American goddess spirituality movement, who see themselves as pilgrims to Malta who are tracing their spiritual heritage to the

prehistoric temples. Such people often enthuse about their deeply emotional experiences in the underground Hypogeum and above-ground temples, of awe, healing, empowerment, transformation, and spiritual revelation, and their sense of homecoming.

More specifically, sound has become a key element of goddess healing experiences at Maltese prehistoric monuments. For example, the California-based singer/songwriter, Jennifer Berezan, who regards music as a source of spiritual renewal, has drawn attention to the acoustic properties of the Hypogeum. To Berezan (2000), 'It was obvious that the people who built it had an incredible understanding of acoustics and of the value and power of sound for healing'. She therefore recorded the title track to her album entitled 'ReTurning' in the 'Oracle Chamber'. This is a chant, which blends various cultural traditions to create an enchanting, peaceful and meditative listening experience. In it, Berezan repeatedly sings, 'returning, returning, returning to the mother of us all', with direct reference to her belief in the Mother Goddess.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate, through the example of the history of Maltese prehistoric archaeology, how systems of archaeological representation, although often prevailed over by the visual, do—and should—also incorporate a variety of other sensory signifying practices, media, and experiences. What emerges is that, over the last three-and-a-half centuries, the material remains of prehistoric Malta have been represented in the context of a variety of sensual orders associated with a diversity of sometimes conflicting interest groups. For Maltese farmers, the ancient sites and monuments have always been an integral

part of their agrarian landscape, which they value as theirs to physically inhabit, work, and modify as they deem fit. But, particularly since the mid-seventeenth century, the Islands' ruins and their buried remains have been appropriated by outsiders, ranging from urban-dwelling administrators to foreign tourists, who have incorporated them within their own poetic and political orders. Above all, it has been their visual culture that has dominated modern representations and experiences of these places and their artefacts, as pleasurable, instructive, and nostalgic sights to be consumed, primarily through the eyes. The other senses have never been entirely excluded in this process, but they have been restrained. As a consequence, demands have grown in recent years for greater full-bodied access to these now finite and fragile remains, to the extent that the significance of all the senses in past and present experiences and understandings of prehistoric Malta has begun to be acknowledged. For the future, this development has the potential to help archaeologists and heritage managers represent the lives of past people in a fresh and stimulating manner for diverse audiences, through practices, media, and experiences enriched by synaesthetic combinations of sight, sound, smell and taste, touch, spatiality, and the emotions.

## References

Abela, G.F. (1647). *Malta Illustrata. Della Descrittione di Malta, Isola nel Mare Siciliano, con le Sue Antichita ed Altre Notitie. Libri Quattro*. Malta: Paolo Bonacota.

Berezan, J. (2000). 'ReTurning, Recorded in the Oracle Chamber in the Hypogeum at Hal Saflieni, Malta. An Interview with Jennifer Berezan'. *Grace Millennium*, 1/1.

[www.gracemillennium.com/winter00/html/berezan.htm](http://www.gracemillennium.com/winter00/html/berezan.htm) [Accessed 24 June 2009]

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation.

Blondy, A. (2001). 'Les Temples de Malte et l'Émergence de la Notion de Préhistoire en France (1770-1840)'. *Dossiers d'Archeologie*, 267: 6-15.

Clack, T. and Brittain, M. eds. (2007). *Archaeology and the Media*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Classen, C. and Howes, D. (2006). 'The Museum as Sensescape', in E. Edwards, C. Gosden, and R.B. Phillips (eds.), *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*. Oxford: Berg, 199-222.

Daniel, G. (1950). *150 Years of Archaeology*. London: Duckworth.

De Brochtorff, C.F. (1849). *Series of Forty-Nine Coloured Drawings Comprising Views of the Island of Malta*. London.

England, R. (1981). *Malta: Monuments in Peril. UNESCO Campaign for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in Malta*. Paris: UNESCO Press.

Evans, C. (2000). 'Megalithic Follies: Soane's "Druidic Remains" and the Display of Monuments'. *Journal of Material Culture*, 5/3: 347-66.

- Evans, J.D. (1954). 'New Light on Malta's Earliest Inhabitants'. *The Listener*, July 22: 129-31.
- (1971). *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: A Survey*. London: Athlone Press.
- Evett, D. (1973). 'Review of J.D. Evans, *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: A Survey*'. *The American Historical Review*, 78/1: 71-3.
- Gathercole, P. and Lowenthal, D. eds. (1990). *The Politics of the Past*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Giles, J. and Middleton, T. (2008). *Studying Culture: A Practical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Grima, R. (1998). 'Ritual Spaces, Contested Places: The Case of the Maltese Prehistoric Temple Sites'. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 8/1: 33-45.
- (2004). *The Archaeological Drawings of Charles Frederick De Brochtorff*. Malta: Midsea Books.
- Guha, S. (2002). 'The Visual in Archaeology: Photographic Representation of Archaeological Practice in British India'. *Antiquity*, 76: 93-100.

Hall, S. ed. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

London: The Open University.

Hallam, E. and Street, B.V. eds. (2000). *Cultural Encounters: Representing 'Otherness'*.

London: Routledge.

Hemp, W.J. (1931). 'Review of *Prehistoric Malta: The Tarxien Temples* by Sir Themistocles Zammit'. *Antiquity*, 5: 139-40.

Holtorf, C. (2007). 'An Archaeological Fashion Show: How Archaeologists Dress and How they are Portrayed in the Media', in T. Clack and M. Brittain (eds.), *Archaeology and the Media*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 69-88.

Hooper Greenhill, E. (1994). *Museums and Their Visitors*. London: Routledge.

Hoüel, J. (1782-7). *Voyage Pittoresque des Isles de Sicilie, de Malte, et de Lipari, où l'on Traite des Antiquités qui s'y Trouvent Encore; des Pricipaux Phénomènes que la Nature y Offer; du Costume des Habitans et de quelques Usages*. Paris.

Howes, D. and Classen, C. (1991). 'Conclusion: Sounding Sensory Profiles', in D. Howes (ed.), *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 257-88.

- Jensen, O.W. (2000). 'Between Body and Artefacts: Merleau-Ponty and Archaeology', in C. Holtorf and H. Karlsson (eds.), *Philosophy and Archaeological Practice: Perspectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Göteborg: Bricoleur Press, 53-67.
- Jones, A. (2001). 'Drawn from Memory: The Archaeology of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Archaeology in Earlier Bronze Age Britain and the Present'. *World Archaeology*, 33/2: 334-56.
- Karp, I. and Lavine, S.D. eds. (1991). *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute.
- Lyons, C.L., Papadopoulos, J.K. Stewart, L.S. and Szegedy-Maszak, A. eds. (2005). *Antiquity and Photography: Early Views of Ancient Mediterranean Sites*. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Martin, D. (1999). 'Maltese Revival'. *Museum Practice*, 4/1: 31-7.
- Mayrhofer, K. (1995). *The Prehistoric Temples of Malta and Gozo: A Description by Prof. Sir Themistocles Zammit*. Malta: Mayrhofer.
- McManus, P. ed. (1996). *Archaeological Displays and the Public: Museology and Interpretation*. London: Institute of Archaeology.
- Merriman, N. ed. (1999). *Making Early Histories in Museums*. London: Leicester University Press.

- Molyneaux, B.L. ed. (1997). *The Cultural Life of Images: Visual Representation in Archaeology*. London: Routledge.
- Moser, S. (1998). *Ancestral Images: The Iconography of Human Origins*. Stroud: Sutton.
- (2001). ‘Archaeological Representation: The Visual Conventions for Constructing Knowledge about the Past’, in I. Hodder (ed.), *Archaeological Theory Today*. Oxford: Polity Press, 262-83.
- Moser, S. and Smiles, S. (2005). ‘Introduction: The Image in Question’, in S. Smiles and S. Moser (eds.), *Envisioning the Past: Archaeology and the Image*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1-12.
- Murray, M.A. (1925). *Excavations in Malta (Percy Sladen Memorial Fund Expedition), Part II*. London: Quaritch.
- Myrone, M. and Peltz, L. eds. (1999). *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice, 1700-1850*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Owen, J. (1999). ‘Interaction or Tokenism? The Role of “Hands-On Activities” in Museum Archaeological Displays’, in N. Merriman (ed.), *Making Early Histories in Museums*. London: Leicester University Press, 173-89.

- Pace, A. ed. (2000). *The Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, Paola*. Valletta: National Museum of Archaeology.
- Pessina, A. and Vella, N.C. (2005). *An Italian Archaeologist in Malta: Luigi Maria Ugolini*. Malta: Midsea Books.
- Phillips, J.E. (2005). ‘“To Make the Dry Bones Live”: Amédée Forestier’s Glastonbury Lake Village’, in S. Smiles and S. Moser (eds.), *Envisioning the Past: Archaeology and the Image*. Oxford: Blackwell, 72-91.
- Piggott, S. (1978). *Antiquity Depicted: Aspects of Archaeological Illustration*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Pye, E. ed. (2007). *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Context*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Rose, M. (2004). ‘A Monumental Mandate’. *Archaeology*, October 12.  
[www.archaeology.org/online/features/malta/index.html](http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/malta/index.html) [Accessed 24 June 2009]
- Rountree, K. (1999). ‘Goddesses and Monsters: Contesting Approaches to Malta’s Neolithic Past’. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 9/2: 204-31.
- Sant Cassia, P. (1993). ‘The Discovery of Malta: Nature, Culture and Ethnicity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Painting (Review Article)’. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 3/2: 354-77.

Shanks, M. (1997). 'Photography and Archaeology', in B.L. Molyneaux (ed.), *The Cultural Life of Images: Visual Representation in Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 73-107.

Shanks, M. and Tilley, M. (1987). *Re-Constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Simpson, M.G. (1996). *Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*. London: Routledge.

Skeates, R. (2010). *An Archaeology of the Senses: Prehistoric Malta*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smiles, S. (1994). *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Smiles, S. and Moser, S. eds. (2005). *Envisioning the Past: Archaeology and the Image*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tagliaferro, N. (1911). 'Prehistoric Burials in a Cave at Bur-Meghez, Near Mkabba, Malta'. *Man*, 11: 147-50.

— (1915). 'Ossiferous Caves and Fissures in the Maltese Islands', in A. Macmillan (ed.), *Malta and Gibraltar, Illustrated: Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures and Resources*. London: Collingridge, 183-5.

Temple, R. (1862). *The Private Diary of Richard, Duke of Buckingham and Chandos*.

London: Hurst and Blackett.

Trigger, B.G. (1989). *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

Vella, N.C. (2004). *The Prehistoric Temples at Kordin III*. Malta: Heritage Books.

Vella, N.C. and Gilkes, O. (2001). 'The Lure of the Antique: Nationalism, Politics and

Archaeology in British Malta (1880-1964)'. *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 69:  
353-84.

Zammit, T. (1930). *Prehistoric Malta: The Tarxien Temples*. Oxford: Oxford University

Press.