

**THE  
AR(T)CHAEOLOGY  
PROJECT**

**VOLUME II**

INTERSECTIONS  
OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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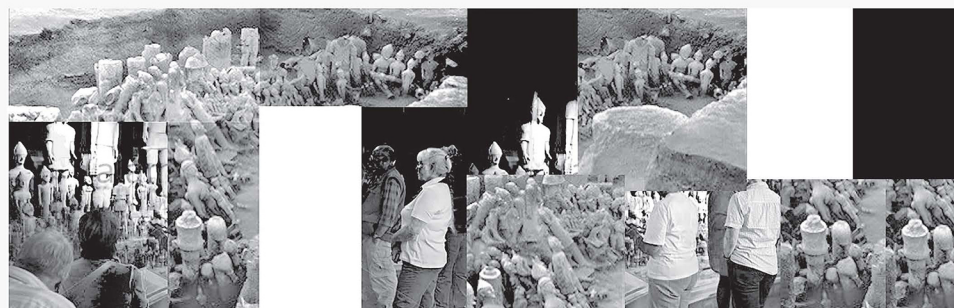
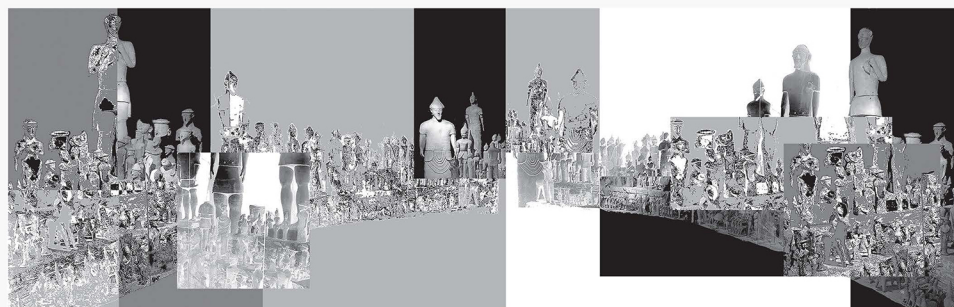
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## SESSION 01 FABRICATED NARRATIVES: RE-IMAGINING & RE-WRITING HISTORIES

VICTORIA AHRENS  
PETER AINSWORTH  
CHARALAMBOS ARTEMIS  
& ALEXANDRA MANGLIS  
NICOLAS LAMBOURIS  
WIEBKE LEISTER  
ADAM O'MEARA

### WIEBKE LEISTER

#### Echoes and Object Alliances

This work takes inspiration from the concentric assembly of terracotta figurines that were excavated in 1929 by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition around the altar of the ancient rural sanctuary of Ayia Irini in northwest Cyprus. Today, half of the almost 2,000 figures are at the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, while the other half are owned by the Medelhavsmuseet in Stockholm as a result of an agreement made in those days. Like other *tamata*, these votive figures were made by local craftsmen and bought by worshippers as offerings. While the identity of the deity venerated at Ayia Irini remains a mystery, most of the clay statues and figurines found at the site were arranged in semi-circles around the altar, with the smallest statues placed nearest the stone at the centre of the assemblage.

Their circular arrangement as a communal gesture prompted me to further explore how we engage with groups of human figurines in a context where they are not portrayals of particular individuals, instead proposing imagery that is constitutive of a cultural communality. The work therefore

operates as a study on how a physical constellation of figures forms a symbolic context in which a contemporary encounter with them can be staged as living objects.

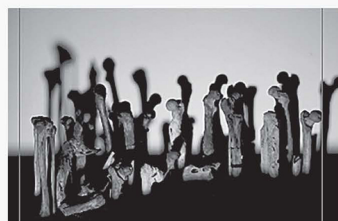
Human societies have always offered votive images to sacred powers through an act of placing a visible token in front of them that represents the connection made with the god. The Greek word '*tama*' (plural '*tamata*') describes a promise or a vow, which can be a votive of thanks or a plea for the future. While ancient *anathimata* depicted three-dimensional bodies and body parts in terracotta and stone, often brought to the temples of the god of healing (Asclepius), most recent *tamata* consist of small flat metal plaques embossed with images that symbolise the subject of the prayer for which it is offered. These ex-voto are brought by believers to the saints as physical manifestations of their hopes and wishes—in fact executing a ritual that brings images (of bodies) to images (of saints)—in the hope that an icon famous for performing miracles in the past will do so again if the offering is made in the right spirit. Most

**28**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2017  
test no.1, Ayia Irini  
Digital sketch  
30.8 x 10 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist

**29**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2017  
test no.2, Ayia Irini  
Digital sketch  
28.3 x 10 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist

**30**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2017  
test no.4, UCL Pathology Collections  
Digital sketch  
21 x 10 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist





**31**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2017  
test no.5, UCL Pathology Collections  
Four component images, digital sketch  
21 x 10 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist

**32**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2018  
test no.7, tamata, Paros 2014  
Digital photograph  
11.25 x 15 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist

votive offerings today relate to health and wellbeing—eyes, ears, breasts, hearts and limbs—of women, men, children and babies, addressing special saints for particular illnesses and capable of multiple interpretations.

While doing some research in UCL's Pathology Collections, I was struck by an assemblage of bones that were prepared in the mid-19th century for teaching and demonstration purposes during the early days of University College Hospital. Mounted on wooden plinths and held in place with metal struts and staples, it is not unusual for specimen like these to be collected without a full record of the person they came from. Arranged like a constel-

lation of tamata, they became more than mere representations of the hopes and wishes of their anonymous donors. Unified by their display, they seemed to be pointing equally into past and future—just like the future is often layered with fragments that have been released from their past, now constitutive for our understanding of the present. Inviting imaginary leaps, photography in this context can function as a tool that invites and unearths imaginary accounts of our collective forebears by citing and re-vitalising unfulfilled potential of historical or archaeological sightings. Both in the present tense and for the present moment. Deconstructed for contemporary purposes, to be invested with new meanings.

V.A.: Permanence versus the mutable or temporal.

W.L.: Tableau? History painting?

P.A.: Effacement.

W.L.: The glorious past then rejected/muted - and unearthed.

P.A.: Through a subjective methodological process.

## WIEBKE LEISTER

Wiebke Leister is a German artist and researcher living in London. She studied at the University in Essen and gained a PhD from the Royal College of Art in London. As well as being course leader for the MA Photography at London College of Communication, she exhibits and publishes her work internationally, for which she has received several awards. As an artist she works with photography, collage and performance, her written practice spans from academic papers to text-based works for galleries. She is a co-organizer of the Photography and the Contemporary Imaginary Research Hub and a core member of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre at University of the Arts London.

**33**  
*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2017  
test no.3, Ayia Irini/UCL Pathology Collections  
Digital sketch  
25.6 x 10 cm  
© Wiebke Leister  
Courtesy the artist



## WIEBKE LEISTER



*Echoes and Object Alliances*, 2018

Photographic collage,  
digital print on vinyl, 150 x 50 cm.  
© Wiebke Leister

## NICOLAS LAMBOURIS

*Propaedeutics on Memorial Structures Vol. 3*

Inextricably political in their discourse on collective memory, monuments and memorials are constructed signifiers of political and national agendas, directly associated with national history(-ies), national narratives and symbols, operating as public platforms onto which selected contexts, identities, and claims are being negotiated. Lambouris challenges monuments and memorials and their function as asserted historical evidence that eventually permeates into collective consciousness and actively participates in historical representation. In this work, he examines the nature and manifestation of these structures as cultural artefacts in relation to their photographic representations, whilst also investigating the act of photographing and its consequent mediated operations. Lambouris' images question photography's function, operating more as cultural or political act rather than as an objective scientific apparatus. Much like the ambiguous monuments presented in these photographs pretending to operate as cultural objects in their own right, their photographic documentation challenges the nature of the photographic medium used to record, document and illustrate, but more importantly, to interpret the material past, and hence lay claim to participating in historical narrative.

## WIEBKE LEISTER

*Echoes and Object Alliances*

While researching the concentric assembly of terracotta figurines that were excavated in 1929 by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition around the altar of the ancient rural sanctuary of Ayia Irini in northwest Cyprus, the artist was struck by a similar circular assemblage of human bones in UCL Pathology Collections' storage, that were prepared in the mid-19th century for teaching and demonstration purposes during the early days of University College Hospital. Arranged like a constellation of tamata, similarly with the votive figurines, the bones become more than mere representations of the hopes and wishes of their anonymous donors. The circular arrangement in both images act as a communal gesture that further explores how humans engage in the absence of portrayals of particular individuals, instead proposing imagery that is constitutive of a cultural communality and collective symbolic context. Inviting imaginary historical leaps, photography in this context can function as a tool that invites and unearths imaginary accounts of our collective forebears by citing and re-vitalising unfulfilled potential of historical or archaeological sightings. Deconstructed for contemporary purposes, these historically distant yet similar images are invested with new meanings.

## ADAM O'MEARA

*Failed Experiment*

The site of O'Meara's investigation is the marshy region of Lincolnshire, UK –also characterised as fenland– that was drained of fresh and saltwater in the 18th and 19th centuries resulting to fertile agricultural land. Specifically, the Beeswax Farm Estates belonging to James Dyson, the British inventor and industrial designer, best known for the dual cyclone, bag-less vacuum cleaner were visited in a series of field trips by the artist. In a performative parody the *Failed Experiment* aims to expose and reconcile the unsustainability of current industrial technological processes and the fragile environmental balance. The work bridges the disciplines of photography and archaeology, while also revealing their commonalities: both focus on particular details, attending to the cultural and historical context of material things, and both are concerned with the documentation of events and their aftermath. In this work, similarly to a contemporary archaeologist, O'Meara's practice attends to the ordinary and the quotidian and that which is not considered worthy of detailed investigation with the view that overlooking the everyday means overlooking the human condition, running the risk of safeguarding only that which is noteworthy, or 'unusual'.