

Archaeological artefact photography: documenting objects, processes or theories?

Short paper (10 minutes)

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Abstract

Photography, from its earliest steps, was connected to archaeology, as it was considered to present a high degree of accuracy and realism. Over the ensuing years, as the theoretical discussion on the character, aims and methods of archaeology developed, the question of the general role of archaeological photography was raised, together with the technical specifications it must meet.

This paper examines the role of photography as part of one of the processes of an archaeological artefact's "biography" –discovery, conservation and restoration, study, and display. Archaeological photography is used to describe and explain these processes or prove their veracity. It thus depends on and is shaped by the aims and theoretical background of the specific researchers.

In this context, the aim of this paper is, on the one hand, to propose technical specifications that maximise the scientific nature of archaeological photography and the user's ability to make precise observations on the object depicted; and, on the other, to propose a documentation model for the processes occurring in an archaeological artefact's "biography", through its photographs.

Keywords: archaeology, photography, documentation