Glam-UR-ous:
The Art of Archaeology and Aesthetics

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Introduction

How does an "archaeological object" become a work of art? How do practices such as excavation, reconstruction, study, and display transform and transfigure an archaeological object—be it utilitarian, sacred, or magical—into a work of art that is then displayed for the pleasure of the senses and the mind? From Ancient to Modern: Archaeology and Aesthetics takes a critical look at these questions to illustrate the multiple layers of meaning that a single object can acquire over the course of its existence—from its creation to its final archaeological context, its discovery, and finally its interpretation and cultural use by modern artists and scholars alike.

In many senses archaeology deals with the deepest layers of culture, demonstrating that history comprises multiple levels of human intervention. Archaeology exposes the past and at the same time reveals how far away it is. As an approach archaeology reveals the distance between us and those who lived long ago, and seeks reasons for humankind’s behavior and ways of perceiving the world. By looking so closely at the past, archaeology allows us to be present in our world, and helps to legitimate our actions and beliefs.


1–2. Standing Male Figure. Gypsum, alabaster, shell, black limestone, bitumen, Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), ca. 2900–2600 BCE. MMA: 40.156. Fletcher Fund, 1940. Checklist no. 140.
Archaeology and archaeologists also search for meaning. When an object is first discovered, it exists primarily as something from the past, disconnected from us, buried in the ground and in our minds (fig. 1–1). The next step in the process is to find a reason for the object’s existence. What does it tell us about the past, the present, or ourselves? Attempting to answer these questions is in many ways the most subjective part of an archaeological approach. The meaning ingrained in an archaeological item can belong to the object, it can be assigned, or it can even be imposed.

The disciplines of aesthetics and art history focus primarily on works of art, posing the critical and primary question of why a particular object stimulates our senses. Aesthetics allow us to contemplate both our inner and our outer worlds, and how a work of art relates to these two complex spaces—spaces that are embedded with a multiplicity of influences, whether individual or cultural. Aesthetics infuse a work of art with meaning and allow the viewer to analyse or criticize it (fig. 1–2). By relating aesthetically to objects, we, as spectators, judge them as or transform them into objects—or images—with meaning, into windows to the world or to ourselves.

While these two fields at first seem mutually exclusive, both approaches are used in making an archaeological object into a work of art. To show this intersection, Archaeology and Aesthetics is the first U.S. exhibition to include a fascinating mixture
of Early Mesopotamian art from iconic archaeological sites, as well as a rich grouping of archival material (fig. 1–3), alongside modern and contemporary works of art.

Archaeology and Aesthetics presents the "biography" of objects, illustrating their discovery and transformation, be it into a virtuoso work of art, a cultural symbol, or a popular icon. The exhibition begins at the point of an object’s discovery, looking at it from an archival as well as a historiographic perspective. We examine how it was first presented to both a scholarly and a larger general audience, and trace how this perspective influenced the object’s place in our understanding of the history of art, and in our modern aesthetic consciousness. To illustrate this latter process, the exhibition includes a selection of modern and contemporary artworks that explore the subject of the reappearance and reconstruction of the past. Artists such as the British sculptor Henry Moore (fig. 1–4) viewed Sumerian art as a powerful expression of original but lost artistic energies, and some of their works directly reflect Sumerian material. This essay begins first with a presentation of the ancient and archival material and is followed by a discussion of our selection of modern and contemporary artworks.

Ur and Puabi: Myth and Reality

The first exploration of the Sumerian site of Ur began in the mid-nineteenth century. On behalf of the British Museum, J. E. Taylor, the British vice-consul in Basra, excavated extensively at the site, and his finds suggested that further excavation would be fruitful. R. Campbell-Thompson in 1918 and H. R. Hall in 1919 were both commissioned by the British Museum to reinstate excavations. However, full exploration of the site did not commence until 1922, when a joint British Museum and University of Pennsylvania team under the direction of an independent British archaeologist, Charles Leonard Woolley, arrived at the site (fig. 1–5). Woolley had worked at the Ashmolean Museum with Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of such legendary Bronze Age sites as Troy, Knossos, and Mycenae. Woolley had also excavated at Corbridge and in Nubia, as well as with T. H. Lawrence at Karkemish, before moving on to Ur, where the mission continued until 1934.

Woolley’s assistant from 1925–31 was the young archaeologist Max Mallowan, whom the novelist Agatha Christie would marry after meeting him on the site in 1930. Christie described life at the mission and the strong personality of Woolley’s wife, Katharine, through the character of Louise Leidner in Murder in Mesopotamia, a riveting crime novel published in 1936 that is now a valuable resource in understanding the social organization of the complex mission house of Ur (fig. 1–6). Katharine Woolley, through her fictional character, was described as brilliant, capricious, and annoying—the pivotal figure around which tensions and relations among the members were woven. The novel was also the first to offer accurate and intelligent views on how an archaeological mission worked. It could at times be a complex structure, located in a remote and not always friendly place, closed like a monastery, where egos were normally repressed but could sometimes explode, as the novel brilliantly explores.

Another notable on the site was the epigrapher Father Léon Legrain, who attended to the second reconstruction of Puabi’s dress, shown at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 1929 (fig. 1–7). He disagreed with Katharine Woolley’s molded head of Queen Puabi and her reconstruction of the head-dress, and chose to fabricate a second mannequin and a new display for her accoutrements. This would be the first reevaluation of how the jewelry should be presented to the public, an issue that continues to perplex and fascinate scholars today.

One of the more interesting social facts about the Ur mission was the relationship between Leonard Woolley and his wife, Katharine Keeling Woolley (fig. 1–8), whom he had met in Oxford. When she first arrived at the site on the invitation of Woolley, she was a widow—or, as Woolley described her, a woman “who was not looking for a husband”—and worked on an all-male team of archaeologists in the middle of the desert. A letter from the director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum to Woolley indicates that he was afraid of a puritan reaction by potential wealthy donors to Katharine’s presence at the site. However, it is clear from the beginning that she was useful,
drawing many of the finds, acting as a guide to rich North American visitors, as well as performing such menial duties as cleaning the mission house and keeping the young archaeologists "up to standard" (whatever that might have been), according to Leonard Woolley. After their wedding in 1928, Katharine Woolley received a higher salary than Max Mallowan, which did not please Agatha Christie.

The work undertaken during this fourteen-year period was stunning both in terms of the extraordinary finds and the extent of the city that the team was able to excavate. At its height the mission included hundreds of workmen, allowing for huge sectors of Ur to be uncovered in rapid fashion. Without question, the site's most famous find was an extremely large cemetery consisting of roughly two thousand tombs of varying date. Sixteen of these were differentiated from the rest by their architecture, the richness of their grave goods, and the existence of human sacrifice. Woolley immediately described and promoted the graves as "royal" and as rivaling the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt, which had been unearthed by Howard Carter in 1922.

At the center of *Archaeology and Aesthetics* is the Royal Tomb of Queen Puabi. Her name, written on a seal found there in what has been read as two cuneiform signs, was first read as Shub-ab, but later also read in Akkadian as Puabi, or "word or mouth of the father." Her undisturbed and expansive tomb (4.35 by 2.8 m), numbered as PG 800 by Woolley, contained extraordinarily rich finds. Jewelry made of gold and semiprecious stones was worn by the deceased and included a complicated headdress all of gold and a heavy "cloak" of beads ending in an ornate belt (see fig. 5–1). Surrounding Puabi were musical instruments, including a lyre, and three more persons described as attendants, who had been deliberately killed.

Most of the jewelry adorning Queen Puabi was found in a condition that rendered reconstruction of the individual elements into their original form challenging (fig. 1–9). Strings had vanished and semiprecious beads lay scattered around her outline. The colorful patterns of a few necklaces and bracelets could be identified, but in some cases excavators found simple masses of beads.

Various members of the team soon began to undertake hypothetical reconstructions of the queen's headdress, "diadem," cuffs, necklaces, and beaded cloak, some of which are now recognized as inaccurate. These inaccuracies are best exemplified by Puabi's so-called diadem, which scholars at the University of Pennsylvania—where many of the discoveries from her tomb are now housed—have recently deconstructed and reinstalled in a manner that this team believes more closely reflects its original use and intention. When Puabi's tomb was unearthed, thousands of lapis lazuli beads as well as a variety and abundance of gold pendants were discovered (see fig. 1–9). In their reconstructions, could Woolley or any of the other team members have had contemporary fashions in mind, or at least have been subconsciously influenced by these fashions? Indeed, Woolley's final reconstruction was a flat band-like diadem with hanging pendants.
uncannily reminiscent of diadems created by contemporary fashion houses. In the 1920s simple band-like diadems as well as elaborate headdresses were very stylish among the affluent. As diadems could also signify royalty, and Puabi was thought to be a queen, a diadem would have been a logical attribute.

From photographs as well as archival imagery, we know that Katherine Woolley was a follower of fashion. She was always unexpectedly well dressed on the excavation site, wearing carefully ironed, drop-waist dresses and fashionable hats, all of which looked as if they had just been purchased from a high-end shop. It may be possible that the Woolleys used the form of a contemporary headdress, similar to that of one designed by Paul Poiret, a leading French fashion designer during the first two decades of the twentieth century, as their conscious or subconscious inspiration (fig. 1–10).
The discovery of Puabi’s tomb set off intense media interest in the site, interest that was supported and even prompted by Woolley. Although archaeologists have published their discoveries more or less regularly since the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until the first part of the twentieth century that finds were announced to general-interest publications. By the 1920s popular news on archaeology focused not on stratigraphy but instead on spectacular finds, as well as on sensationalized descriptions of the cultures that produced them. For example, Howard Carter, the excavator of Tutankhamun’s tomb, used the press to the significant benefit of the site in order to promote his Egyptian discoveries to an international audience, thereby launching Egyptomania throughout Europe and America. Woolley followed the same strategy immediately after the first discoveries in Ur, spending extensive time writing detailed press releases that were meant to attract the general reader (fig. 1–11). The words were simple, the titles flashy. His deliberate intention is evident in the fact that he even discussed with the University of Pennsylvania and the British Museum when, where, and how to announce future extraordinary findings so that they could reach the broadest audience. Using these releases, newspapers printed spectacularly written articles, produced as centerfolds with sensationalized titles such as “Evidence that the Queen of Ancient Ur Was Clubbed to Death” and “Ancient Queen Used Rouge and Lipstick” (fig. 1–12). When viewed together the articles clearly show a tension between wanting to relate Puabi to a modern understanding of royal behavior and accepting the evidence of what was perceived as the violent, almost savage death of those interred with her; such human sacrifice must have been shocking to the modern, Western viewer. It is almost as if audiences had trouble coping with the fact that such a clearly elite woman could be found in such a brutal final context, even in the ancient past.

The Diyala Valley: Archaeology Finds Aesthetics

The finds from North American and British archaeological missions during this period can certainly be described as having their own character. While Ur delivered the most elaborate and impressive Sumerian jewelry, the Diyala Valley became known for its exceptional repertoire of sculpture. As a corpus these statuettes are now considered the aesthetic and technical paradigms of Sumerian sculpture, and scholars continue to reconsider their value to and meaning for third-millennium culture (figs. 1–13a, b).
Diyala is the name of a river originating in the Zagros Mountains, running chiefly through eastern Iraq and flowing into the Tigris. Four main archaeological sites have been excavated: Tell Agrab, Tell Asmar, Ishchali, and Khafaje. Supported by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, these missions began in 1930 and continued through 1937, followed by short interventions run jointly by the Oriental Institute and the University of Pennsylvania. The area was far from known Sumerian sites, which were located in or near the southern marshes of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers (including Ur, Uruk, Tello, and Eridu). A sudden flow of antiquities in the souks of Baghdad in the 1920s, objects that were considered authentic and known to come from sites near Baghdad, showed that the Sumerian culture reached farther north than expected.

All four missions were led by Henri Frankfort, a Classical art historian and an archaeologist who was also a specialist in Ancient Egyptian culture, and the author of the seminal and still relevant publication *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*. Renowned Sumerologists such as the epigraphist and poet Thorkild Jacobsen—who isometric drawings were significant in the field card and object documentation—also participated in the Diyala mission. In Frankfort’s nine publications, both architecture and sculpture were presented as relevant “arts.”

The archival material chosen for the exhibition reflects the scholarly, meticulous, and clearly aesthetic approach to excavation and documentation at Diyala, an approach that may have been advanced by Frankfort’s gifts of organization and interpretation of material. Field registers meticulously record each object’s find spot and are also regularly punctuated by fine drawings of objects (fig. 1–14). Carefully drawn images of objects on field cards show sculptures thoughtfully placed in the white space of each page, almost like fine-art drawings, with short descriptions placed toward the corners in order to balance the impact of the image (fig. 1–15). In a way, these drawings can be appreciated simply for their artistry. The first photographs taken of finds also have an artistic quality, again as if these objects were considered as works of art. Many photographs show objects from several different angles and not only provide valuable
documentation of what the material looked like after it was first cleaned, but also artistically embrace the three-dimensional quality of the material (fig. 1–16). When viewed as a group, the Diyala photographs have an immediacy similar to that of 1930s documentary photography that captured difficult living conditions after the Crash. Some of these Diyala photographs were used to illustrate books that Frankfort wrote on the aesthetic qualities of Sumerian sculpture.\(^{16}\) Thanks to the austere isolation created by dark backdrops in these images, the sculptures can be appreciated as free-standing objects, separate from the influence of the architecture—temples, palaces, and tombs—to which they were originally attached. The photographs of the Diyala Valley were the means by which Sumerian archaeological finds were transformed into timeless works of art.

The large number of statuettes found also allowed scholars to identify certain main types: the now iconic standing, bearded male “worshipers” with their hands clasped in front of them and wearing long skirts; standing female figures in the same pose with varying hairstyles and dress (fig. 1–17); and male figures seated on large rectangular boxes. The majority were found buried in the Abu Temple at Tell Asmar, and in the Nintu Temple at Khafajah—hence, the term “worshiper”—and were soon considered the first sculptures in the history of Western art. In Frankfort’s *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, however, and in many of his other texts, the context is omitted, and the sculptures are described as representing the origin of sculptural art. “Instead of sharply contrasting, clearly articulated masses,” Frankfort wrote, “we see fluid transitions and infinitely modulated surfaces. Instead of abstract shapes, we see a detailed rendering of the physical peculiarities of the model. By a new and subtle treatment of the surfaces...the Early Dynastic sculptors, having followed abstraction to its utmost limits, began to explore the possibilities offered by the opposite approach.”\(^{17}\) Leading art historians defined the works as “primitive,” connecting them to a world that was not yet rational.\(^{18}\) However, because they were related to magical or superstitious thoughts, the objects were not judged as true works of art, since within the terms of mid-twentieth-century aesthetics, disinterested creations—as defined by Kant—could not exist. But Frankfort, who became director of the Warburg Institute of London after the Second World War, helped to give a new meaning to the word “primitive,” one that removed any pejorative connotations. Now the term could describe art that was different, but not inferior, incomplete, or basic. So-called primitive images, such as Sumerian sculptures, communicated an understanding of human beings and their position between the visible and invisible worlds, rendering these images as sensible as any work of art. Influenced by the art historian Aby Warburg—who interpreted images as a way to express the pathos, or expressions, that characterize and shape human lives—Frankfort wrote that “the fundamental difference between the attitude of modern and ancient man as regards the surrounding world is this: for modern, scientific man the phenomenal world is primarily an ‘It’; for ancient—and also the primitive—man it is a ‘Thou.’”\(^{19}\) These ancient sculptures were “works of art” and presented a starting point for Western interest in the human form.

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1–17. Standing Female Figure. Gypsum, Diyala, ca. 2700–2500 BCE. Private Collection, USA. Checklist no. 48.


It is within this context that the sculptures’ first and ongoing exhibition in museums must be understood. For example, at the Chicago’s World Fair of 1933–34, known as “A Century of Progress,” five statuettes were on view in a museum vitrine and described as “the oldest ever found in Asia.” In both temporary and permanent installations, Sumerian sculptures were and continue to be presented as works of art.

From Ancient to Modern and Beyond
Modern artists also began responding to Sumerian art soon after the material made its way into public display. The discovery and exhibition of “primitive” artifacts in the early twentieth century—due to the efforts of Western colonial powers in Africa, Asia, and Oceania—and a revitalized interest in the “pre-Classical” arts of Europe led artists such as Braque and Picasso to present the vital structures and shapes of the world without reproducing their appearance, resulting in Cubism and other artistic movements.

New visions of the inner and outer worlds were translated into new shapes and compositions and entered the world of art at the end of the 1920s. Sumerian anthropomorphic figurines, such as the Diyala statuettes on display in this exhibition, were considered the first artistic manifestation of the human figure. On view in some museums throughout Europe and America, they fascinated Surrealists before the Second World War, including Alberto Giacometti, Georges Bataille, Henry Moore, and Barbara Hepworth, and artists and poets in the 1950s, including Willem de Kooning, David Smith, and Charles Olson (fig. 1–18). These painters, sculptors, and writers saw in Sumerian art and poetry the translation of original energies and values that had been lost. A new path for the history of art was being opened.

Both Giacometti and Moore, who began their artistic careers in the 1920s, are represented in this exhibition. For them the discovery of Sumerian sculpture was a revelation, and they felt that something essential to the understanding of human life was revealed by these objects. Giacometti, in response, created a series of drawings that embraced the image of Gudea, emphasizing the geometric patterns that structured the sculpture (fig. 1–19). After breaking with his academic training, Moore found Sumerian sculpture to be the simplicity and expression of life (see fig. 1–4), “with no decorative trimmings, which are the sign of decadence, of flagging inspiration,” as he wrote in his 1935 review of Christian Zervos’s book *L’art de la Mésopotamie*, one of the first publications on Sumerian “art” considered as art. Moore was fascinated too by the relation he discovered in Sumerian statuettes between the head and the clasped hands, which, although small, held for him “a wealth of meaning.” In his view these austere heads and hands were a sign of true humanity.

The painter Willem de Kooning is also known to have looked at the Tell Asmar statuettes for inspiration. Between 1950 and 1953, he produced six large, seminal female
paintings (as well as complementary series of color drawings and engravings), known as the Woman series, that are seen as opening the doors to Abstract Expressionism. Abstract they are not, but instead recognizable grotesque female images submerged in a rain of short intense brushstrokes, as if defining and destroying the bodies. Significant in the present context, many show a strong frontality and have the wide, staring, hypnotic eyes that are so intimately connected with Sumerian sculpture (figs. 1–20, 1–21).

**Past as Present and Present as Past**

Since the 1950s artists have continued their fascination with Sumerian art. The loss and destruction of Mesopotamian art and architecture during recent invasions in the Near East and current civil wars have poignantly alerted contemporary artists such as the Iraqi-Irish Jananne al-Ani and Michael Rakowitz, who is of Jewish-Iraqi heritage, that an erasure of human memory is occurring in the region, an erasure that apparently will not stop until it destroys the land, its historical monuments, and its inhabitants and their riches.
Currently living in London, al-Ani in her work deals partly with Westerners’ biased image of Near Eastern human geography as well as the loss of memories of the historic past through destruction propelled by humankind itself. Shadow Sites II is an extraordinary video installation illustrating that the desert, an icon of Near Eastern spaces both dreamed and feared by Westerner travelers, is not in fact a desert. Subtle layers of past and present—archaeological structures, agricultural interventions, military camps, roads, and landing fields—remain, revealing that deserts have been and are populated, and thus sites where traces of human beings are registered, places of memories.

Untitled May 1991 [Gulf War Work], also by al-Ani, and on view in this exhibition, is a collection of black-and-white photographs related to the artist’s memories, as well as those of people living in Iraq, that illustrate why it is important to feel attachment to one’s land and to what is being lost and destroyed by the incessant series of wars that have plagued the Near East since the 1980s (fig. 1–22). Among these images are family portraits that trace ties and losses, including Sumerian artifacts that may seem exotic to the Westerner but that are clearly familiar to people who have roots in Near Eastern culture. Overall, the series exposes the insidious effect that war and its destruction can have on families and their memories, gone forever.

In the same vein, Rakowitz’s art comments on the current destruction of history reaching deeply into the past. His family fled Iraq in the 1940s, and the embattled country and its perception in Western countries is a main focus of Rakowitz’s art. The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist (Recovered, Missing, Stolen) shows life-size reproductions of Mesopotamian artifacts (primarily sculptures) made of cheap, mass-produced Iraqi materials, displayed on a sinuous table that evokes a path (fig. 1–23). This allusion is not gratuitous. The title of the installation is a translation of the name of the Babylonian processional way that in ancient times led to the temples; in Rakowitz’s installation it drives us only to the loss of part of the collection of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, left unprotected from pillage during the Second Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The reproductions show some of the temporarily or still-missing masterpieces. Made with boxes of everyday Iraqi products that can be bought in markets and shops in Baghdad, Rakowitz’s sculptures symbolize the disposable condition of these manufactured items, thrown away after use, just as Sumerian artifacts were treated as trash—through cupidity and ignorance—by robbers and invaders. The work symbolizes ignorance of the past, and the recognition and acceptance of the “other” that affects our modern culture.

Conclusion
By exhibiting archaeological objects alongside archival material (letters, pictures, documents, notebooks and field records, press clippings, and publications) and modern and contemporary works of art, we hope to convey that these things are not substantially different, but rather ontologically identical. Documents show how an archaeological find has been received and promoted, allow a find to become a work of art, illuminate the way an archaeological object has been transfigured into an aesthetic object, and stand as proof that this transubstantiation has taken place. In some cases an archaeological find was accompanied by documents in a deliberate attempt to create a certain modern image of the object, with the desired result that the discovered object was actually accepted as a work of art. The ontological metamorphosis is complete when an artist interprets an archaeological item and produces his or her own work of art, which is either superficially or essentially similar to the ancient item. This process has enlarged the worlds of archaeology and aesthetics. It has also given new meaning to certain ancient objects, making them more complex and more intriguing, and breathing continuous life into them.

From Ancient to Modern: Archaeology and Aesthetics suggests the vital and complex role that personalities, and their desire for the promotion of archaeological material in an international context, have played in the conversion of specific objects into works of art. It also offers information about the discovery, presentation, and interpretation of archaeological finds in order to allow the viewer to judge them by his or her own standards. Some art theorists argue that a true work of art has enough power or magic to communicate the embodied message to anyone who is looking or listening to it, while others assert that we cannot evaluate a work of art if we know nothing of its history or agenda. We agree that a work of art cannot be perceived and evaluated without knowledge of its past and the story it tells. This exhibition and the catalogue that accompanies it communicate information about the exhibited archaeological material and the history of its promotion and reception, a history that explains how and why these items have entered the world of art, to which at first they did not and could not belong. The exhibition invites us to look at these archaeological finds with new eyes. Just as they are transformed by our perception, may we be able to bear their scrutinizing eyes, which change us too by letting us discover a new world and new meanings for already known worlds.
Endnotes

1 For a full discussion of the early excavation of Ur, see Zettler 1998. See also Emberling 2010; Kuklick 1996; Bernadsson 2005.

2 For the full ten volumes of Woolley’s reports on the Ur excavations, see Woolley 1927–76. For a summary, see Woolley 1954.


4 Ibid.

5 Ur, Iraq Expedition Records, Correspondence, Exp. V, Jan.–July, 1927, UPennMuseum Archives, Philadelphia.

6 For a discussion and analysis of Puabi’s jewelry, see Benzel in this volume.

7 “Are we right then in calling these royal graves and their occupants Kings and Queens?... Dr. H. R. Hall said...the finds [at Ur] could only be compared with Schliemann’s at Mycenae in wealth of gold; and their completeness rivalled the funeral outfit of Tutankhamen.” Woolley 1928: 425.

8 For a full discussion of Puabi’s tomb, see Zettler and Hafford in this volume. See also Zettler 1998; Reade 2003.

9 Miller 2013. See also the essay by Pittman and Miller in this volume for an alternative view of the diadem.

10 Egyptomania—that is, public infatuation, especially in France, with Egyptian sites and finds, increased by traveling exhibitions of original funerary offerings, or copies, from Tutankhamun’s tomb—has itself become an issue in the exhibition world. See, among others, Brier 2013; Collins and McNamara 2014. For a full discussion of the press surrounding Ur, see Azara and Marín in this volume.

11 Frederick G. Kenyon, at the British Museum (to unknown recipient), about publicity of the finds, Jan. 5, 1926; Kenyon to Mrs. McHugh, Jan. 17, 1928, Ur, Iraq Expedition Records, Correspondence, Exp. V, Jan.–July, 1927, UPenn Museum Archives, Philadelphia.

12 Among the publications that featured the news were the Washington (DC) Herald, Nov. 25, 1928, and the Rochester (NY) Times-Union, Nov. 8, 1929.

13 A complete bibliography on the Diyala Valley archaeological missions has been prepared by the Diyala Project, which is led by a team of scholars at the Oriental Institute; see https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/diyala/bibliography. See also Frankfort 1939 and 1943. See also Reichel in this volume.

14 Frankfort 1954.


16 Frankfort 1939 and 1943.


For a discussion of primitivism and its use in the study of Sumerian sculptures, see Evans and Green in this volume.


Lazaic 2011.


Rancière 2011.


While Danto (1981) considers the viewer as the subject, Didi-Huberman (1992) fully credits the work of art for transforming us into a viewer. We cease to be blind after confrontation with the work, which acts as an illumination. Our eyes open to the world, and we are able to see what it means through art’s sensible shapes. The power of images to choose their viewers and to offer them humanity by allowing them to look, as described by Didi-Huberman, is the fundamental premise of the Byzantine theology of divine images. While Didi-Huberman’s theory of art analyzes the relationship between a work of art and the viewer awakened by it, Gell (1998) considers that a fetish, such as a Sumerian worisher statue, is a living being able to exert a powerful influence not only on one person but on a group, whose vision of the world is altered by the object, by the belief in its illusory—but felt as real—power.