THE ONTOLOGY OF THE DOT
LA ONTOLOGÍA DEL PUNTO ARQUEOLÓGICO

ABSTRACT

Along with the technics that allows archaeology to adopt a precise knowledge about the composition of the materiality, also exists a critical thought that claims for take into account experience, perception and creativity. In the latter, we find Art-Archaeology approach. With this at background emerged the idea of the presence and the ontology of the 'dot' in archaeology, identified in the ongoing process of the attendance of a meeting at Kyoto, in the excavation of a simulated site, in the survey of an unidentified site and in a short research about Prehistoric tattoo. This idea, in its explicit simplicity, is part of a creative thought situated in the roots of the archaeological practice. In this paper I reflect about this through an artistic photo-essay that is at the same time an artistic and theoretical exercise, with the intention to identify the existence of the 'dot' in different dimensions of archaeology, and to make theory making art.

Keywords: archaeology; art; creativity; dot; theory.

RESUMEN

Junto con las técnicas que permiten a la arqueología adoptar un conocimiento preciso sobre la composición de la materialidad, existen otros modos de pensamiento crítico que frente a ello reclaman tener en cuenta la experiencia, la percepción y la creatividad. Dentro de esta segunda tendencia se encuentra la del Arte-Arqueología. Con ello en mente, en el transcurso de la asistencia a un congreso en Kioto, en la excavación de un yacimiento simulado, de la prospección de un yacimiento contemporáneo desconocido y de una pequeña investigación sobre el tatuaje prehistórico, emergió la idea de la presencia y ontología del 'punto' en arqueología. Esta idea, en su simpleza explícita, forma parte de un entramado de pensamientos creativos situados en las bases de la práctica arqueológica, sobre los que se reflexiona en este trabajo a través de un foto-ensayo artístico que es al mismo tiempo un ejercicio artístico y teórico, con la intención de identificar la situación del 'punto' en diferentes dimensiones presentes en la arqueología y de teorizar creando arte.

Palabras clave: *arqueología; arte; creatividad; punto; teoría.*

José Antonio Mármol Martínez

tic78josemarmol@hotmail.com

Universidad Complutense Madrid, España

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I explore the constitution of a concept, the archaeological dot, in the process of making and visualizing a photographic essay. This is an ocularcentric and visual work, in which a pre-stablished category (the dot) is incorporated to the perception of the material world. I will use dots as a hybrid entities identified in the ongoing fieldwork. The aim is to exemplify an alternative to hegemonic techno-science, understanding the Past as a palimpsest created in the hands of archaeologists whose labour has been understood around textual, metaphorical concepts as deep digging, detective work, cleaning and restoration of the fragmentation and so on (eg. Shanks and Pearson 2001). In this sense, objectivity is an illusory category rooted in the natural practices of science located in the structure of modernity (Fernández 2006). The study of the Past is also concerned with senses, nostalgias, melancholia, in a fluid world.

The first surrealist group of 1924 discovered that under observable reality - this we classify with modernist, Renacentist categories (Renfrew 2003) - there were another alternative worlds. The surrealists used these realities to critique the hegemonic culture which led to injustices and deception after World War I (Clifford 1988). Some of these artists, like the Spanish Salvador Dalí, tried to combine science and art under this point of view. Others, like Michel Leiris or Georges Bataille worked with the firsts important French ethnographers, traveling to Africa for recover interesting objects (Clifford 1988). This "ethnographic-surrealism" changed the ethnography of that time by means to consider alternative ontological realities apart of the Western one.

Surrealism and ethnography also introduced the very idea of fragmentation as category for the analysis of the world. Although this idea is based on some ocularcentric tropes like the existence of a pre-abstract reality which is re-built through the fragments, is to say, a pre-establish plan of action guided by the final income to be made, the idea is about to break the naïve knowledge based on artificial epistemologies. In the 30s, fragmentation appeared as the stratigraphic understanding of these several realities. Indeed psychologist Sigmund Freud was seduced by this idea, like his work about the stratigraphic excavation of the mind shows (Simonetti 2015). This means that art and archaeology, together from the beginnings of epistemology, entered in a new field. Archaeology and surrealism bumped into each other, sharing much more than the idea of stratigraphy.

Until the material turn, archaeology have been long understood as a cultural production, based on built something from the union and interpretation of fragments. This were accompanied with metaphors about collage, assemblage, and so on, reinforced by textual theory and the idea of the construction of knowledge (eg. Shanks 2001, 2012; Shanks and Pearson 2001). The incorporation of fieldwork to this production made appear the concept of discovery. Knowledge would be created by transforming materials of nature into significant culture (Egdeworth 2003). This means to think that things only exists if are transmuted to culture, built over a given world. To propose an alternative, we can talk about the emergence of knowledge: far from dichotomic concepts (nature/culture, body/mind, etc.) knowledge would emerge in the physical correspondence with the world, through senses -there is not a clear boundary between these dichotomies, since all are incorporated to the ongoing work in anticipation (Ingold 2001, 2013; Ingold and

Hallam 2007). It is not to make something cultural from nature, but let things to emerge in action where we can incorporate all kinds of knowledge (Simonetti 2013, 2015). We are guided by the ontology of materials, not by the understandings of the record as a text nor materials as source for culture as separated fields. Things owns live stories far from our control. Like surrealists, we must accept the existence of several ontological realities.

This proposition is epitomized in this photo-essay. This work involves a theoretical reflection on the creative processes of the archaeological practice through pairs of photographs. In every case, the first photo tries to represent a part of the site over which the 'archaeological dot' is superimposed, a kind of epistemological intervention that guide our interpretation of the site, in the second pic. This let us to question issues of epistemology and ontology in the fieldwork. It is there the archaeological dot? Do it exist? It is just a category? How the practice is modified by dots? The identification of the dot means to mobilize many resources from its perception, the shoot of the camera, the digital edition, and so on. In all these steps of the process memories, intentions and senses raised up -it is not just a mental or cultural work.

In recent times, we have seen the apparition of new interesting approaches on the line of Art-Archaeology and Creative Archaeologies. Many artworks from contemporary artists has been used to exemplify theoretical concepts or to explain the art of the people of the Past (eg. Renfrew 2003; Cochrane and Russell 2013; Valdez-Tullet and Chittock 2016 among others). In theoretical terms, art opens new creative ways to understand the nature of archaeology. However, the point is to not to understand art as modernist production of final incomes to be seen, but as creative processes that lies

in every movements of life. It is not art history nor the analysis of artworks of others; actually, it is not about definitive specular results, artworks. It is about a creative attitude towards archaeological practice. This approach, in my opinion, differs from the textual approach to theory and practice. Therefore, in this paper, I do not follow a distinction between art and theory; my aim is to present a practical framework to understand the archaeological assumptions proposed.

METHODOLOGY

The idea of this essay comes to me at Kyoto, Japan, when I attended the eight World Archaeological Congress (WAC-8) 2016, where due to the Japanese understandings of creativity I started to think about art such in a way far from genuine authorship and innovative originality. As an archaeologist and artist, it represented a long way to walk.

The artwork I propose, "The ontology of the dot", is about the use of the 'dot' -or 'point', as in Spanish we use the same word for both- in actions at archaeological contexts, understanding the 'dot' as a concrete physical place that articulates several dimensions of archaeological practice, in which it's possible to superimpose one of the definitions given for the 'dot'. However, this will be explained later. The artwork was created in several spaces where I identified new uses for this. Therefore, I took photographs along all my archaeological activity in 2016, in the excavation at a simulated site; in the survey of an unidentified site in Monte Miravete (Murcia, Spain); in the short research about prehistoric tattoo; and in the attendance of a congress. The search for these points were then extended to both simple and complex fieldwork, paper lecture, and meeting experience.

In these activities I identified some points that, looked at the distance, gave the sense of unity. Carefully observation shows how these points are like material anchors to movements, attitudes, boundaries, memories, knowledge and signification, moving all the fieldwork around them. Indeed fieldwork are based on the accumulation of this kind of dots. However, it is not common to treat these points as epistemologically relevant elements. Since these points depends of a visual identification in my essay, the question is if these points could be also ontological.

So, guided by inspiration and informed by photo-ethnography (a kind of ethnographic method based on informal visual material in which perception and experience are privileged in interpretation at the expense of textual categories, see eg. Moreno 2013), I shoot with both my smartphone's camera and my reflex camera once I identify one of these dots. There was not any technical or specific aesthetic requirements, and in most cases, the pic was product of casualty. The only pre-defined issue was the frame of the pic in order to not to lose any contextual detail. Once the pic was done, I keep it separately on a digital folder, with dates, information, thoughts, and so on. I edited every pic with PhotoScape software to convert them on black and white in order to be able to identify easily the original from the edited one. Then I created a digital document where I introduced every pair of pics, horizontally. The last step was to mark out where I identified the dot, using a grey circular-shape figure.

These pics are presented in pairs, in a dual opposition where we can see a part of the site and the edited image in black and white with the grey point indicating where I identified the archaeological dot. With this, we can compare our own awareness of the dot in the unedited pic in comparison with the edited one in which I act as guider for the viewer, and then corroborate how epistemology is randomly superimposed to ontological world.

Of course, it is not an unproblematic exercise. First, because even the original photograph is in itself a mediation between materials and the representation, spectators, and author. The veracity of the pic is just in the belief of its nature as record. Second, the action inside the essay is only visual, about spectators and artifacts to be seen, this seems to be contrary to my intention to avoid ocularcentrism. Beyond these two apparently contradictions, the visual-essay works just as inspirational exercise if the viewer is able to incorporate its own experiences to it. Therefore, here is not any aspiration to truth.

ART-ARCHAEOLOGY AS APPROACH

In the context of the material turn, the distance between abstract theory and physical world is more narrow day per day (González-Ruibal 2012). In this interstice, art for theory has reach our discipline bringing new ways to understand materiality.

It is clear that the techniques and thoughts of artists has been used to do science along the time, as we can see in the work of Leonardo or in the notion of science as "art of…", of the Renaissance. Our categories to organize reality comes from these times in which descriptions were made by the use of drawings (Renfrew 2003).

This is also clear in the first's ethnographies done by the Spanish priests in the communities they contacted with, through methods

based on drawings with the aim to give faith about what they saw. Now, art historians analyze many of these depictions. The same situation happens when we talk about archaeological drawings if we understand them just as visual artifacts. Further reflections arises through Joseph Kosuth's "One and three Chairs" (1965) where a reflection about issues of veracity, representation, textuality and ontology could be made.

A critical attitude towards archaeology ask for question taken for granted assumptions. These kind of reflections has been made in recent years in the works about critical theory (eg. Fernández 2006), and by alternative understandings of knowledge, like senses studies (eg. Hamilakis 2014; Simonetti 2013; Ingold 2013), the peripatetic video (Weebmor 2005; Witmore 2006; also Van Dyke 2006), or sounds (Witmore 2004), etc. Other works put their focus on the limitations of methodology, through archaeological ethnography (eg. Hamilakis, Pluciennik, and Tarlow 2001; Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009; Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos and Ifantidis 2009; Edgeworth 2010, 2006, 2003; Castañeda and Matthews 2008; among others). In line with these alternative understandings of the practice, we find themes mixing art and archaeology (eg. Tilley, Hamilton, and Bender 2000; Shanks and Pearson 2001; Shanks 2004, 2012; Valdez-Tullet and Chittock 2016; Cochrane and Russell 2013; Georghiu and Barth 2018, incoming; Marmol 2017, among others). As we saw above, this last theme could be re-defined far from the prevalence of final incomes, especially with proposals from Art-Anthropology (eg. Ingold and Hallam 2007; also Schneider 2017).

In this line, art understood as creative process allow us to focus on a difference: while techno-science present a propositional approach to the world, based on the search of truth, specular artifacts, and final results, art provides a non-propositional, practical and growing knowledge. It does not need to be explained and depend more on experience and perception than to schemes of description.

The relation between art and archaeology in practice has been common as exemplify "Le dejeuner sous l'herbe" (1983) by the French artist Daniel Spoerri and the French archaeologist Jean-Paul Demoulé, among other examples, especially from British artists like Mark Dion with his "Tate Thames Dig" (1999-2000). In addition, we can find examples all over the world like the Art&Archaeology Forum in Kyoto, Japan, where artists are invited to collaborate with archaeologists. More archaeo-artistic coincidences could be found in the archaeological fieldwork in the Monte Miravete site at Murcia (Spain), done by a strong Art-Archaeology approach. My personal experience involves also our work in the Archaeodrome, a fake archaeological site of 5x5 meters square where we do artistic and archaeological practices (figure 1).

In this place, I identified several processes about collection, fragmentation and earthing (opposed to excavation) in the ongoing process of the creation of the entire site that involved performance and aesthetics, memories and improvisation. This was conceptualized in my artwork "Archaeological Contra-Museum" presented at Sightations exhibition at Southampton, UK (TAG meeting 2016).

More examples around aesthetics are the works of the Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei, who use elements of the Chinese Heritage to create pieces through destroying real archaeological artifacts as Neolithic urns from the Han period ("Han dynasty urn" (1995), "Han Dynasty urn with Coca-cola logo" (1994)). Other artists working on field

Figure 1: Archaeodrome field-school. At background, in the tallest mountain, Monte Miravete site

Fuente: picture taken by the author.

are Arman with his 'packed' rubbish-art; Simon Fujiwara with his works "Phallusies" (2010) and "Frozen's" (2010); Daniel Guzman and his artwork about the presence of the archaeological in the daily life through his piece "La dificultad de cruzar un campo de tierra cualquiera" (2012); and also great painters like Picasso who used prehistoric art as inspiration. We could find many artists like Dragos Georghiu or Richard Long in Land art, and interesting proposals in Conceptual art, such Duchamp itself, and his understanding of art as materialization of ideas. One of my favorite art style is Street art because involves the creation of new sites through changing the meanings of the public space. The creation of art is an archaeological evidence itself, because the artwork always would represent the artist's agency (according to art anthropologist Alfred Gell, in Layton 2003:450). I do not think so -art would be archaeological due to common creative processes, not because superimposed abstractions, as agency, to final incomes to be seen.

About photography and ethnography

To avoid ocularcentrism in this visual enterprise, I decided to manage a direct observation and participation on the field, and then recorded with ethnographic methods. Some authors in archaeological ethnography have pointed out that archaeological knowledge is not only built with social organization and hierarchies (eg. Edgeworth 2006), but is discovered in the practice where natural raw materials are transformed into cultural information (Edgeworth 2003). As I explained above, I think instead that knowledge emerges in the practice. My interest to include senses to ethnography then led me to photo-ethnography (Moreno 2013), and to the work of Hamilakis and Infantidis (2016) in Kalaureia (Poros, Greece) which I use as inspiration for my own photo-ethnography at Monte Miravete site (Murcia, Spain) (Marmol 2016, incoming). This kind of approach combines anthropology, archaeology and art.

It make contrast with the techno-quantitative methods popular in current archaeological research. Like a secret path in the hegemony of the visual, it is a form of auto-ethnography where reflexivity is opposed to traditional distances of the research like the Other's context, observations, interviews, narratives, and so on. It turns its interests to all subjects and contexts of research. These elements not depends of the skills of a photographer or videographer, because they have value anyhow -it moves between the academic and the artistic (Moreno 2013).

The mainstream conception is that the intemporality of photography, the photographs as immutable mobile artifacts (Van Dyke 2006) would make them good tools for support the processes of social analysis (Moreno 2013). However, photography is not independent. If we understand them as cultural artifacts, they are more than a representation of reality. We find in them discourses that imposes its own regimes of signification, requiring a context of interpretation to understand its meanings. To going deep into them is to discover social relationships of production, consume, power, knowledge, etc., modern relations that confirms our distance from the reality seen. In ocularcentric terms, to photograph is a social action and not only a merely technic achievement (Moreno 2013). Its truth, to follow a Foucauldian concept, is an effect of power. Once decoded its contents, the pic can become an artifact full of symbolic potential (Moreno 2013), almost a thing that could be object of archaeological analysis, like the pics of Syrian refugee's materiality at Lesbos (Greece) done by the journalist Santi Palacios.

In photo-ethnography, the pic is not only a passive artifact for illustration of acts but also   allows visualizing concepts and facts to which understand environments, bodily dispositions and relational interactions (Moreno 2013). The visual sources used for this kind of ethnography may be selected from unintentional records like selfies, scientific photographies of materials, pics from the excavation, newspaper or even papers and meetings. Through photography, it is possible to capture these details of daily life to be analyzed, and to incorporate the "native voice" of the people represented in its interpretation (Moreno 2013:128). Here the visually of the artifact go further than textual incomes such descriptions, since provokes the emergence of free expression, sensibilities produced at the moment of the shoot, and to "think with eyes and hands" (Ruiz Zapatero 2014:65. Translation mine). In the moment of the shoot, the materiality of the camera, the hands, the eyes, the knowledge and the intentions of the author, and the always changing material world to be captured are corresponding to each other, making possible the moment of photography in the conjunction of all of them. Independently of the result, this process implies a great capacity of improvisation that makes the photograph an incidental income of the ethnographic process.

In archaeological photography, we add another element of signification, the memory (Ruiz Zapatero 2014:56). Inside every photograph, there are several temporalities, making memory a guiding exercise to be made. However, its intention of 'truth' hides its potential and free signification, as happens with the struggle between needlessly to be explained art, and scientific obligatory explanation.

It is common to think there is a 'strategy of representation' that constitutes under intentional agendas what is represented (Ruiz 2014; Van Dyke 2006). This heterogeneous understanding needs an sceptic attitude which start with doubting about the photo-

graphic veracity itself: considering Karl Heider's concept 'Rashômon effect' (Heider 1988) we are aware of the several interpretations, equally rightful, that archaeologists have, which are in conflict with the ones of others. There is not a unique truth even in the simplest processes like photography.

The photograph have an evocative power articulating stories and connecting different memories, sometimes about a moment that does not already exist (Shanks and Svabo 2013; Ruiz 2014). They connects the unreal with the real, recreating new experiences providing new meanings (Webmoor 2005). Then the world appears as an entity that can be captured, paused a divided into stable temporal periods (Bergson 1963). The pic requires the use of an archaeological imagination (eg. Shanks 2012), more sensual than textual. Photographs are itself a mystery that the viewer has to decode, making emerge inspirational sensations and close relations between time and space, bodies and artifacts.

Under specular terms, the object of study is approached from the aesthetic, in the limits of a mainstream analysis, which along objectification, institutionalization and legitimation establish such conditions for the analysis of collective production of knowledge (Moreno 2013).

What photo-ethnography proposes is to transcend the artificial limitations of our subjects of study through sensibilities, with the addition of other corporal, sensual elements and kinetics that participate in the flowing of the reality that has been 'captured'. Symbols, signs, attitudes, gestures, and footprints, from all these the photo-ethnographer obtain new perspectives about signification (Moreno 2013). Why just separate all this experience in little parts to fit them into strictly processes of classifica-

tion? The visual essay I propose plays with irony when identify textual symbols, dots, over the material world. Instead of start from pre-stablished texts, texts are being created through the visual interpretation of inexistent textual symbols.

DISCUSSION: THE ONTOLOGY OF THE DOT

What is a dot?

According to the common definition, we could find in any dictionary a dot is a "small signal which is perceived due to its (color) contrast with the surface, commonly represented as circular" and as "grammatical signal which indicates the end of a sentence or a pause in a wider text much more than any other grammatical sign" (note that in Spanish, the word 'punto' means both 'dot' and 'point'. These definitions have been taken from the Spanish language Academy dictionary www.rae.es). This is similar to the concept we imagine at the time to read the word 'dot'. However, what is actually a point, a dot? If visual element perceived by contrast with his background, are also dots all the elements that contrast with a background? Indeed, to identify something by contrast is the basis of perception.

In Spanish language, dot and point have the same meaning. A point could be several things depends of the discipline. We can use points for measure; to refer to the minimum contact with a surface; are also a geometric form; a concept of limits like in Maths; as indicator of a point; a grammatical sign; an indicator of temperature; use it when one status change to another; as anatomy indicator (cardinal points), etc. In Latin, a point (punctum) is any hole done by drawing. It represent something that has ended or what are going to start. Also something which

serve to rest, a pause, the end and the begin, anger, quantitative valuation, bodies in the space.

In all this senses of the use of a point (dot), we see two main characteristics: 1-it index or represent the objectification of a real phenomenon (eg. measurable properties), and 2-it is the transmutation from one status to another. These two possible meanings are fluctuating between passivity and activity, pause and speed.

In this artwork, I will try to show this objectification and transmutation using the concept of 'dot' applied to several archaeological contexts. Following this, I have found the point, the dot as a movement and as materiality as well. Like an act of ethnographic documentation and as an artistic indetermination where a point is something theoretic, imagined, observable, to face it out.

To distill the world in such a manner to be able to fit the phenomena into mainstream categories of classification, it is common the use of points. This use means to push one status into another, like reflecting vests making visible new subjects in the landscape. The point is the sensitive beginning that attracts our attention.

Beyond the grammaticalness, we find the dot as a universal key to understand materiality like stone structures or pottery sherds emerging during excavation (indeed the finds are perceived as goals, that is, to follow a grammatical relation, to consider them as points too). Therefore, the remains are points of attention and can be connected with other kinds of different-nature points, like if we were surrealists sailing in a sea of alternative realities. The dot could be passive but also performative indicator of the creative acts performed by archaeologists.

Here the dot is not a textual symbol just in its very meaning; ontologically (if we accept the ontology of a dot); it is diverse and heterogeneous, in unexpected ways. If the dot have a very nature, it would be possible because there are something material on it, something that should be independent from us, with a life-story. If not, we are talking of dot typologies, artificial, textual features imagined over materials -then observed features that fit into pre-stablished categories of analysis.

So, said that long explanation of the theory that informs my position, let me present the artwork finally. In this photo-essay, you can observe the pairs of pics accompanied with a short explanation of the dot identified in each case.

• Dot as minimal contact with a surface: this pair of photographs comes from a moment during the excavation of the Archaeodrome simulated site. Here the dot could be identified due to its role as articulator of interactions between the body, the trench and the white threads used to delimit the squares to be excavated -two epistemological worlds that contact one to each other in the same fluid world. The white threads, parts cut from the same thread, are also contacting one to each other, creating a dot at the cross point, as dot as minimal contact with a surface (figure 2).

• Dot as point: this pair shows the nails used to keep the threads of the trench. These two points are markers in the landscape of the site, and requires a careful attention to not to move them. Even several forces (hits with a hammer, stones, and nails pressure) would be mobilized to make them stable points. Once the trench has been excavated, these nails are keep as axis of the internal order of the practice. Also they marks the boundaries of the site and represent a physical path in

which significant elements are exported and imported to inform the next steps of the excavation. As almost the unique fixed point in a fluid practice, all depends of its mainte-

nance. After the excavation, the little holes left by them, in case to being removed, will be there as much as the earth of the site in the iron surface of the nail (figure 2).

Figure 2: Above - Dot as minimal contact with a surface: on the bottom - Dot as point
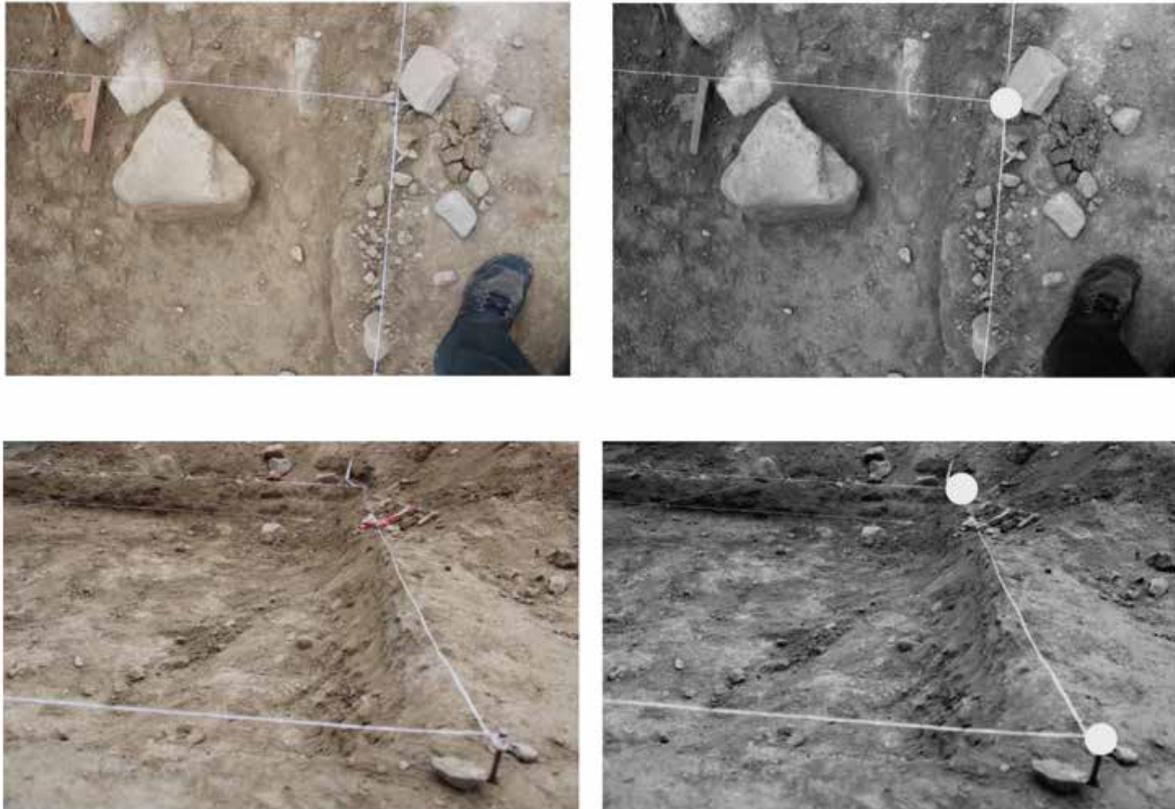

Fuente: picture taken by the author.

• Dot as numbers: these couple of pairs shows the diary of the survey at Monte Miravete site, in which the team had written the coordinates of the structures found on the site. Every sequence of numbers represent a point inside the space in where there are an archaeological remain, but also these sequences are points inside the context of the paper. Even we represented them as black points with names and numbers in a digital map. This record means to incorporate conceptual information both in the practice of survey and in next visits, articulating with maps and points further engagements with the landscape (figure 3).

• Dot as representation: the archaeological

drawing is made by the contact of the pencil in a paper surface. The dots used to represent volumes and irregularities of the archaeological artifacts serves not only to make a testimony of veracity of what has been recover, but also allows to conceptualize the materials for the study of its properties. However, this study is only logic inside the rules of the method, otherwise the draw would be an unreal representation made by the interaction of the pencil, the ink, the paper, the hand and the intentions of the author. If the draw contains enough veracity, it is because the conceptualization of the materials recovered: they are like points in the context of the research that are transfor-

Figure 3: Above - Dot as numbers; on the bottom - Dot as representation
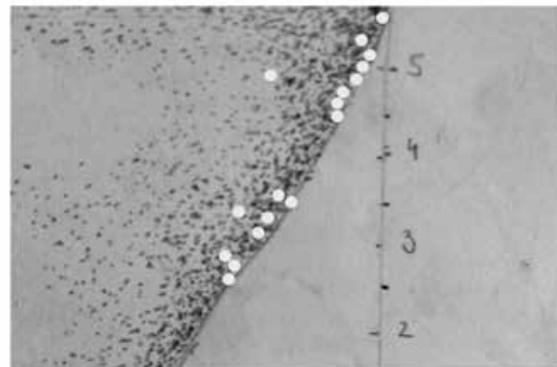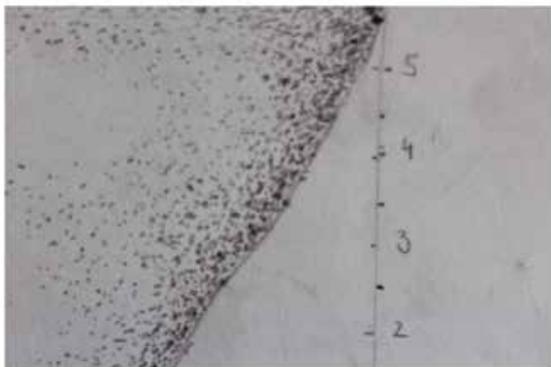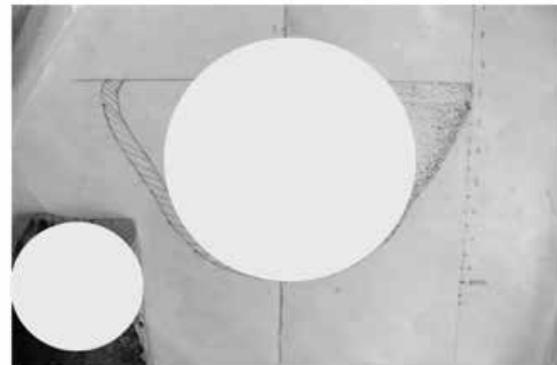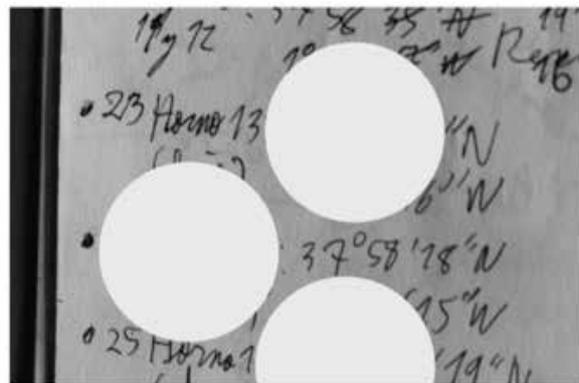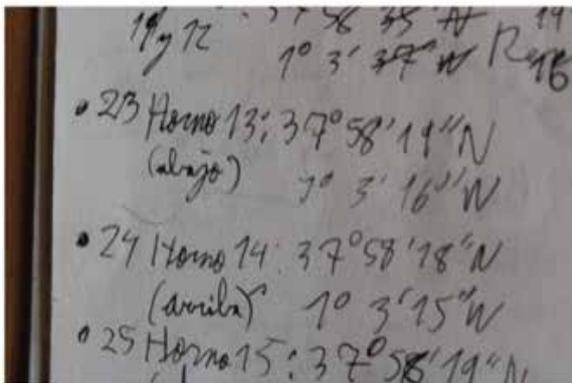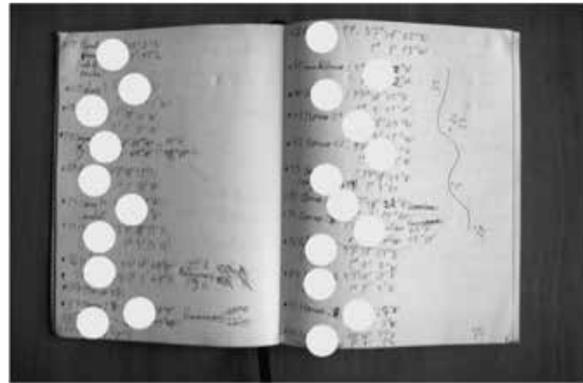
Fuente: picture taken by the author.

med into a thousand of points in the draw. This exercise follows a direction of disgregation, the disappearance of materiality into its technological representation. The ontology of the materials is seen analogue to the artificiality of the dots, clearly separated from the field but incorporated in further practices (figure 3).

• Dot as form: summer. We are surveying an 18km² site in which we found this circular-shape structures, kilns of the 19th century. These structures seems to be dot-like, circular points. In addition, there are other kinds of dots since we can represent them in maps, using points as have seen above. We can draw those structures using points, and even the record sheets shows two points more: the draft plant and the textual description. Since structures have made its own paths in coordination with the rest of the elements of landscape, those paths we involuntarily followed in the survey, the structures are also articulators of some particular phenomena in which the movements of the archaeologists are included (figure 4).

• Dot as diacritic symbol: in the architecture of photograph, relevant elements like mate-

Figure 4: Dot as form
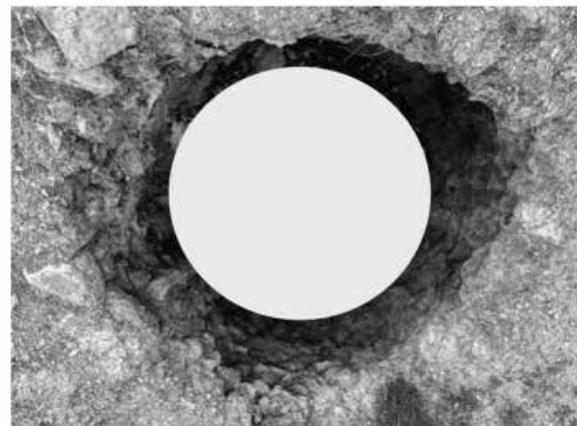
Fuente: picture taken by the author.

rials found are perceived as points among the rest of elements seen. These elements are points of attention, these that makes the image 'archaeological-like'. In this sense, tools like the trowel are also points in the photograph, defining the pic as a meta-representation of the archaeological practice. In visual terms, they refer to a world outside the available information in the image (figure 5).

• Dot as physical change: from the soil, the finds emerge through the actions of volunteers. As a find, this little lamp is a point in the context of the entire research. However, this material, composed by a reunion of clay, paint and maker's hands, also have a history of life, which is hidden for the volunteers. It was made by us, prior to its earthing in the site. Nevertheless, independently of this fact, to be corroborated has to be presented through photographs under the terms of the archaeological documentation. From clay -materially- to a namely category -medieval lamp- this remain is conceived at the distance as a point, contrasting with the ground, and with several temporalities (figure 5).

• Dot as anatomy: maps represent several geographical features. Since what are represented is the relevant elements for the

Figure 5: Above - Dot as diacritic symbol; on the bottom - Dot as physical change
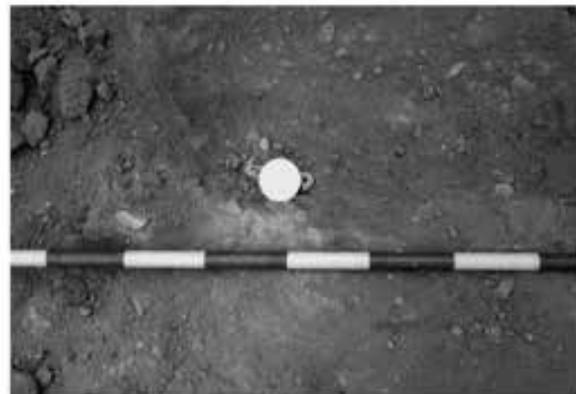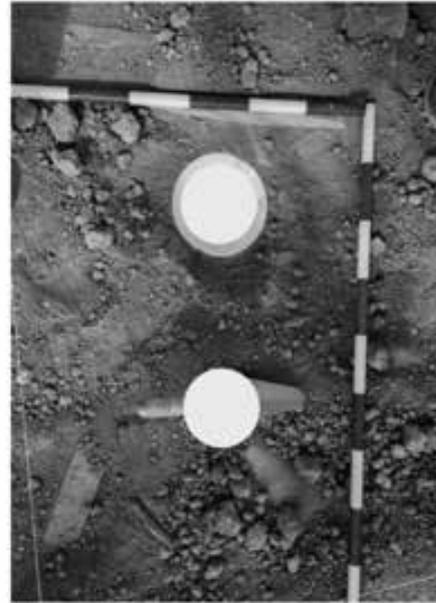
Fuente: picture taken by the author.

research, and the research is conducted by human aspirations guided by materiality, the map would incorporate a sensual geography of landscape. Not just geographical information, but also paths, remains, special places to be remembered. The points of the maps are not only passive representation of visited places, but also a projection of memories and possible possibilities for future. This kind of points could be also iconic representations showing how the corporal movements in the space (figure 6) are.

• Dot as performance: there are no much

conserved examples of ancient, prehistoric tattoo. Some of these few examples seems to be enough information for create a discourse about the Pazyryk culture (Argent 2013). The analysis of relationships between representations and cultural aesthetic schemes has been common. The performative act of tattoo, the incorporation of real beliefs and aspirations through hand movements into the skin with inked sticks, reminds the creation of documents over which we hope to continue the research. To tattoo implies the explicit insertion of thousand dots into the skin (figure 6).

Figure 6: Above - Dot as anatomy; on the bottom - Dot as performance
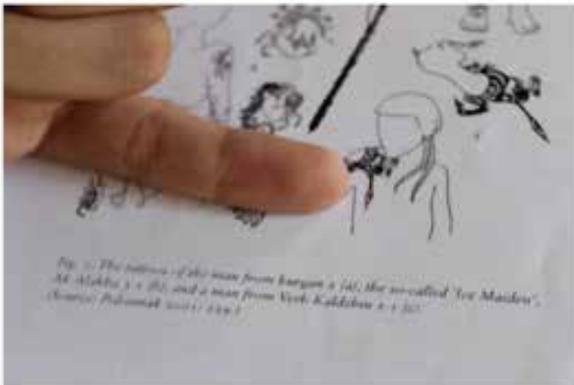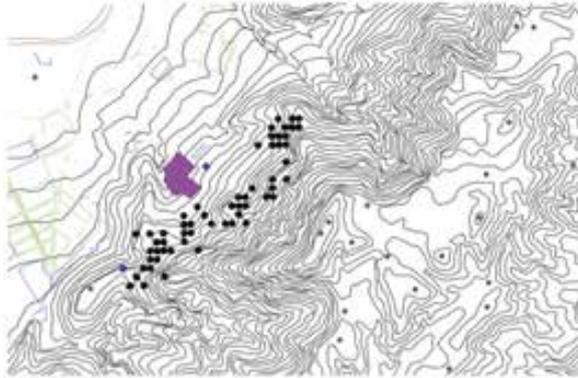

Fuente: picture taken by the author.

• Dot as grammatical symbol: it is common to think that archaeological information is complete when it is published. Then all the experiences, processes, engagements and contacts with materials are summarized and selected, written in few pages. Those pages are white surfaces in which black ink is deposited, creating forms that represent signs. It usually happens with the act of typing on a computer. As Ingold pointed out, typing is the example of how modern human beings are losing their humanity, since we only use the fingertips in our interaction with the material world (2013). In the text itself, we also use signs. Moreover, some of these takes the form of pics, figures and quotes, points referring to other realities among seas of words. Here the dot act for understand the text, to have an experience of reading based on little stops and ongoing reading. Then it is a performative act ruled by this symbolism, also physically present with a mount of ink in the form of a dot (figure 7). The dot is always out there, in daily experience, making us to stop and breathe.

• Dot as bodily experience: our bodies are part of the landscape of the research. On fieldwork, archaeologists with reflecting vests are material points in this landscape. However, for foreigners and for the ethnographer, they are part also of the wider natural environment. Being points, their engage-

Figure 7: Dot as grammatical symbol
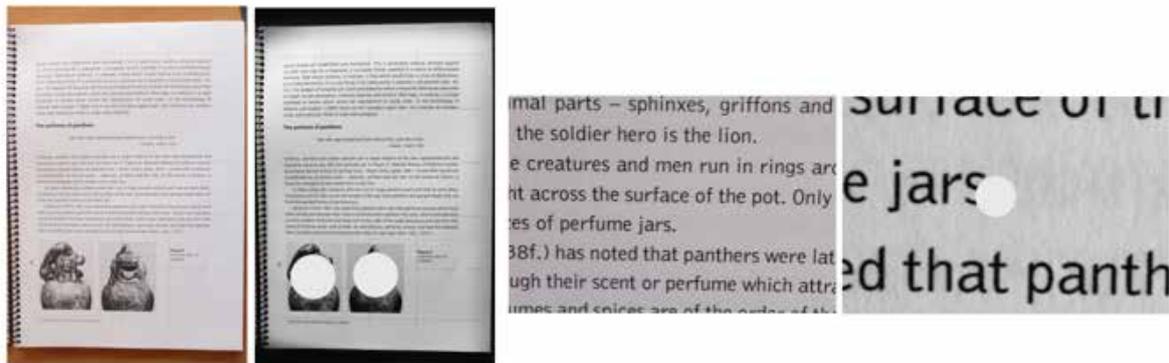
Fuente: picture taken by the author.

ment with the field happens through artificial understanding of nature (figure 8).

• Dot as concept: this pic shows the record sheets to document the archaeological findings. These sheets are analogue to the camera, in the sense they works in the same way instrumentalizing real phenomena. The conceptualization of the stone structures is done first with a textual description of its main characteristics, then with a draft drawing through which measures, locations, coordinates, and are recorded. This is the

Figure 8: Dot as bodily experience

Fuente: picture taken by the author.

creation of points from points to make more points in the maps and publications (figure 9).

• Dot as geometry: here the dot is evident. The circular-shape of this fragment of pottery reminds us that the idea of materiality recognizable from geometry to be contemplated is profoundly ocularcentric. This fragment was a point in the fieldwork, now is a point in the database since it is one of the significant pieces of the research (figure 9).

• Dot as artistic income: archaeological life brought me to Santander (north Spain) to

Figure 9: Above - Dot as concept; on the bottom - Dot as geometry

Fuente: picture taken by the author.

attend a meeting. I visited Covalanas Cave, in where there are a stunning Prehistoric rock art, representations of deers made by dots. I tried to reproduce how these could had be done drawing points, as I did with tattoo above. The dot as art is just a retrospective category to name a creative process we unknown (figure 10).

. Dot as unit of measure: one of the common uses for a point is to measure things, to make accounts. In this sense, archaeology uses measure tools and points of reference. Doing so, what we see can be understood. The points constitutes a basis for the horizon of possibilities, articulated around aesthetics of archaeology and the narrative of bring the Past in the Present.

The stone wall is not neither natural nor cultural; never left to be material. It is significant just in the reign of modern rationality, while became part of the life story of landscape since ever (figure 10).

Figure 10: Above - Dot as art; on the bottom - Dot as unit of measure
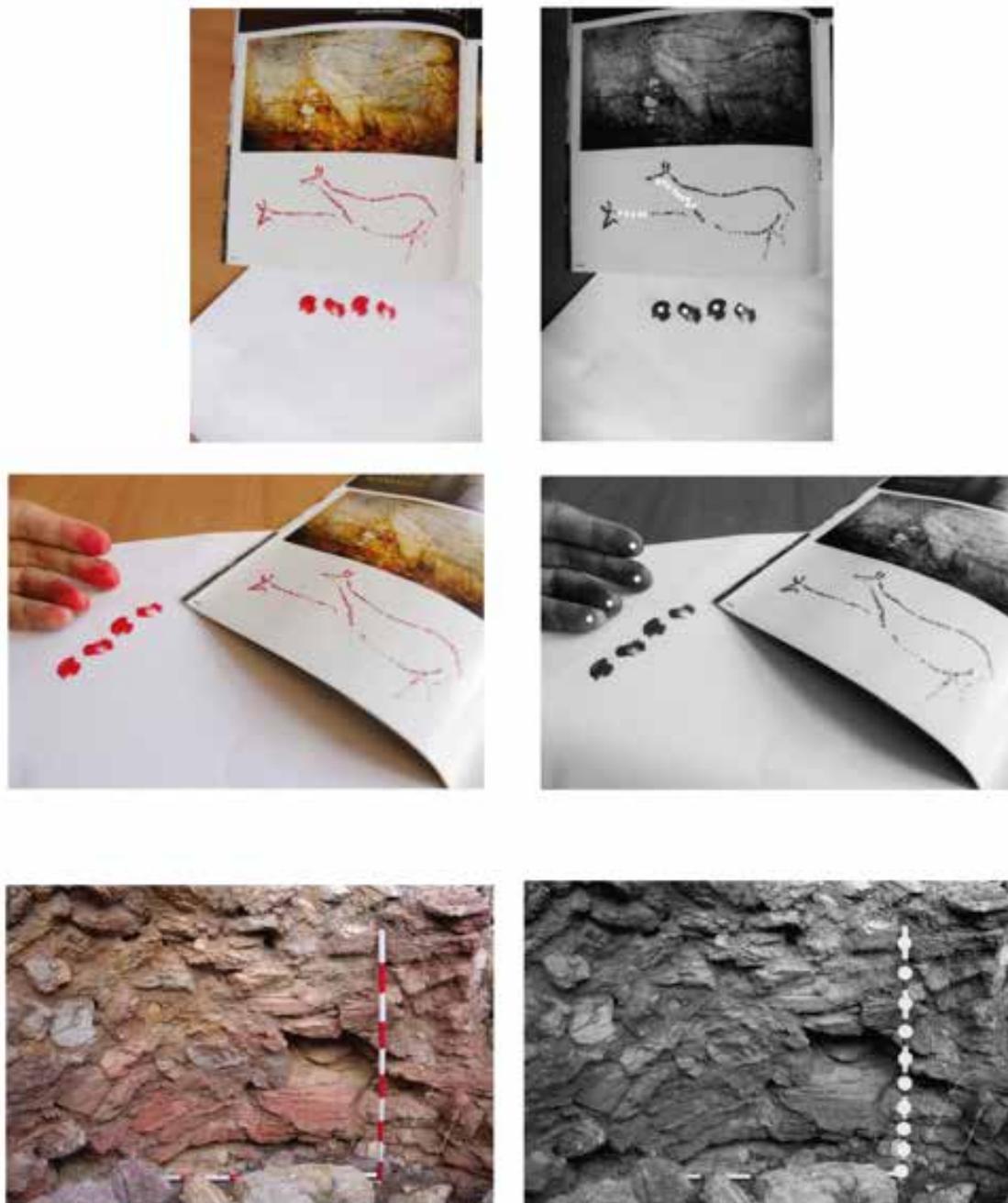
Fuente: picture taken by the author.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have tried to theorize about those entities that articulates the archaeological practice, which are not natural nor cultural, neither physical nor mental, but a mixture. According to this perspective, knowledge is not constructed nor discovered, but is emergent through practice (Simonetti 2013). This departs from the conception of epistemology as an artificial set of categories superimposed to the world, in which human intervention is only a chapter of the independent life-story of things. In this sense to talk about the idea of "search entities in the world" is an unsuccessful enterprise -such entities does not exist ontologically.

In the context of the "material turn" in archaeological theory, archaeologists have tried to come back to things in order to understand the role of materiality in the constitution of the social -a framework influenced by the actor-network theory of philosopher Bruno Latour. But this perspective still takes the human intentions over the materials, since materials seems to be conceived as accessible goods to human projects, as if were at the shelf in the supermarket, and then to be incorporated to human actions. The distance between materials and humans is dichotomic. Instead of this, humans can follow the life-stories of things, like in the meshwork of Tim Ingold (eg. Ingold 2008). From a creative point of view, the first theory focus on results and the second on processes. However, to focus on results also involves having a predeterminate plan of action, which guide the creative practice until the income arrives. This is clear in the high technology since based on play this role like an instrument between human intentions and data in form of epistemological 'truth'. With any creative engagement of the capacities of our body working

with the materials, this process implies a distance. In addition, this distance is based on the sight, on incomes to be contemplated resulted from pre-established plans and designs to be implemented in advance. This doctrine is called ocularcentrism (Jay 1993).

Nevertheless, in this exercise I have tried to avoid this hegemony of the specular. To use visual incomes to talk about ontology could be contradictory, so I made a direct observation through the scope of archaeological photo-ethnography. This visual essay then is not an artistic work but a creative process of investigation, since the final income is not the result of a premeditated plan but the incidental result of the very process of identification of the 'dots'. It is incidental because, as surrealist's states in the 1920s, there are many alternative realities, which can lead to unexpected entities.

The artistic work takes here the form of text, photographs and reader's imagination. There are not a unique interpretation since the identification of these dots are not objective. Indeed the claim of this paper is to point out the 'ontology of the dot', but what actually have been shown are several typologies of dots. Then dots may be epistemological, artificial entities I superimpose over the material world, as I physically did in the edition of the pics. In addition, these types are a pre-established categories used to divide the several kinds of dots. If I did so is because I felt something in these places, independently if that sensation can be called 'dots'. Instead of give the name 'dot' to some features of things that I perceived, some features of things attracted my attention due to its kinetic implications -then I named them.

The evocative power of the artwork is also part of our human condition. In this time of anomia, liquid culture and high technology

we are living, non quantifiable goods sounds useless. Specially high technology has been conceived as exclusive mediator with the world -we act through the machines, losing the capacity to make knowledge emerge if it depend of bodily engagement. Now technology owns the genuine agency in the creation of knowledge. This contrast with the conceptualization of the Present as actuality, as conjunction of Presents. These Presents doesn't follow straight chronological lines like the ones conceived under the modern idea of progress and technology-based ideologies, but the Present is no more than an instant, just the instant of the movement, and the Past does not exist anymore since is impossible to repeat or reproduce something that change at every second (Bergson 1963). In the checking, comparison attitude over the pairs of pics of the artwork, the time passing is corroborated: the pics changes at every second as the viewer takes awareness of the dots.

"The ontology of the dot" is only a contribution to the line of Art-Archaeology, trying to theorize in archaeology through the active participation with both artistic and archaeological practices. This is a theoretical proposition born in the ongoing process of attend a meeting in Kyoto. What is the relation between the meeting and this work? Theory depends of inspiration, as art. In this sense, I do not understand theoretical thought out of practice as if were a collateral effect of processual analysis. Theory is also about acting, and I act doing this artwork. To point out the existence of dots into the archaeological practice and the dot as concept of metamorphosis that can be applied to processes of fragmentation and unification, just exemplify how the textual understanding of materiality is too far from real growing nature of things. This is the trick: the 'ontology of the dot' is an oxymoron. I hope to have shown some possibilities for creativity beyond

visual terms. The essay is just the income of a process where a symbol, the dot, were traced in the ontology of materials. However, this is also a kind of poetical analysis that guide us beneath the certainties of modern archaeology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Argent, G. (2013). Inked: Human-horse apprenticeship, tattoos, and time in the Pazyryk world. *Society & animals,* 21(2), 178-193.

Bergson, H. (1963). La evolución creadora. In H. Bergson. *Obras Escogidas.* Madrid, España: Aguilar.

Castañeda, Q. & Matthews, C. (2008). *Ethnographic archaeologies: reflections on stakehold-ers and archaeological practices.* Walnut Creek, United Estates: Unidos: Altamira.

Cochrane, A. & Russell, I. (eds.). (2013). *Art and archaeology: collaborations, conversations, criticisms.* New York, United Estate: Springer.

Clifford, J. (1988). On ethnographic surrealism. In J. Clifford (ed.). *The predicament of cul-ture.* Cambridge, United Estate: Harvard University Press.

Edgeworth, M. (2010). On the boundary: new perspectives from ethnography of archaeology. In D. Garrow & T. Yarrow (eds.). *Archaeology and Anthropology.* Oxford, England: Ox-ford Books.

Edgeworth, M. (2006). *Ethnographies of archaeological practice: cultural encounters, materi-al transformations.* Walnut Creek, United Estates: Altamira.

Edgeworth, M. (2003). *Acts of discovery: An ethnography of archaeological practice* (Vol. 1131). Oxford, England: British Archaeological Reports.

Fernández, V. (2006). *Una Arqueología Crítica: ciencia, ética y política en la construcción del Pasado.* Madrid, España: Crítica.

González-Ruibal, A. (2012). Hacia otra Arqueología: diez propuestas. *Complutum,* 23(2), 103-116.

Hamilakis, Y. (2014). *Archaeology and the senses: human experience, memory, and affect.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Hamilakis, Y. & Ifantidis, F. (2016). *Camera Kalaureia: An Archaeological Photo-Ethnography.* Oxford, England: Archaeopress.

Hamilakis, Y. & Anagnostopoulos, A. (2009). What is archaeological ethnography? *Public ar-chaeology,* 8(2-3), 65-87.

Hamilakis, Y., Anagnostopoulos, A., & Ifantidis, F. (2009). Postcards from the edge of time: archaeology, photography, archaeological ethnography (a photo-essay). *Public Archaeology,* 8(2-3), 283-309.

Hamilakis, Y., Pluciennik, M., and Tarlow, S. (2001). Academic performances, artistic presen-tations. *Assemblage,* (6), 7-21.

Heider, K. (1988). The Rashômon effect: When ethnographers disagree. *American Anthropologist,* 90(1), 73-81.

Ingold, T. (2001). Anthropological perspectives on technology. In T. Ingold. *Beyond art and technology: the anthropology of skill.* Albuquerque, México: University of New México Press.

Ingold, T. (2008). When ANT meets SPIDER: Social theory for arthropods. In C. Knappett & L. Malafouris (eds.). *Material Agency.* Boston, United Estate: Springer.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture.* London, England: Routledge.

Ingold, T. & Hallam, E. (2007). *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation.* An Introduction. In E. Hallam & T. Ingold (eds.). Creativity and Cultural Improvisation. Oxford, England: Berg.

Jay, M. (1993). *Downcast eyes: The denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought.* California, United Estate: University of California Press.

Marmol, J. (2016). *Proyecto Arqueológico Monte Miravete: Foto-etnografía arqueológica #1.* Un estudio visual y sensorial del trabajo de campo de la campaña de prospección arqueoló-gica de 2016 (Unpublished book). Monte Miravete Project, Murcia, España.

Marmol, J. (2017). Dropping the trowel: three narratives and one creative archaeology. *AP Journa,* (6), 75-116.

Moreno, W. (2013) Fotoetnografía educativa: una ruta para comprender la cultura corporal escolarizada. *Revista Iberoamericana de educación,* (62), 119-141.

Simonetti, C. (2013). En presencia de lo ausente. Rastreando materiales en movimiento. *Papeles de Trabajo,* 7(11), 40-61.

Simonetti, C. (2015). The stratification of time. *Time & Society,* 24(2), 139-162.

Layton, R. (2003). Art and agency: a reassessment. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 9(3), 447-464.

Shanks, M. (2004). Three rooms: Archaeology and performance. *Journal of Social Archaeolo-gy, 4(2),* 147-180.

Shanks, M. (2012). The Archaeological Imagination. Walnut Creek, United Estate: Left Coast Press.

Shanks, M. & Pearson, M. (2001). Theatre/archaeology: Reflections on a hybrid genre. London, England: Routledge.

Shanks, M. & Zvabo, C. (2013). Archaeology and photo-graphy: A pragmatology. In A. Gon-zález-Ruibal (ed.). *Reclaiming Archaeology. Beyond the tropes of Modernity* (pp. 89-102). London, England: Routled-ge.

Schneider, A. (2017). *Alternative Art and Anthropology: Global Encounters.* London, England: Bloomsbury.

Renfrew, C. (2003). *Figuring it out. Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* London, England: Thames & Hudson.

Ruiz, G. (2014). Fotografía y Arqueología: ventanas al pasado con cristales traslúcidos. In E. Baquedano (ed). *Jose Latova. 40 años de Fotografía arqueológica española.* Madrid, España: Comunidad de Madrid.

Tilley, C., Hamilton, S. & Bender, B. (2000). Art and the RePresentation of the Past. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 6(1), 35-62.

Valdez-Tullet, J. & Chittock, H. (2016). *Archaeology with Art.* Oxford, England: Archaeo-press.

Van Dyke, R. (2006). Seeing the past: Visual media in Archaeology. American *Anthropologist,* 108(2), 370-375.

Weebmor, T. (2005). *Teotihuacán, Mexico. Mediating Monumentality: An Experiment.* Recovered from http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/teotihuacan

Witmore, C. (2004). Four archaeological engagements with place mediating bodily experience through peripatetic video. *Visual anthropology review*, 20(2), 57-72.

Witmore, C. (2006). Vision, Media, Noise and the Percolation of Time Symmetrical Approaches to the Mediation of the Material World. *Journal of material culture,* 11(3), 267-292.