



Gorffennol Digidol Digital Past - 2021

TRUTH, ETHICS AND EXPRESSIVE TECHNIQUES:

Making digital videos to record and interpret archaeology and cultural heritage.

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As discussed in my paper at Gorffennol Digidol | Digital Past 2020, ideas from documentary film theory can aid understanding of ethical and other qualities of heritage interpretations rendered in audio-digital formats (e.g. virtual reality experiences and digital videos). Expanding on this theme I will draw on my practical experiences as both a professional archaeologist and a digital video producer to consider ideas about truth, representation, ethics and the role of expressive techniques when making online videos about archaeology and heritage for research, education and public outreach.

Digital photography and videography technologies enable cultural heritage practitioners to capture and interpret detailed visual information about places and objects to support their work. In some cases this visual information is regarded as 'objective data' which can be usefully analysed to solve well-defined research questions or manage practical problems in heritage conservation. Visual information 'captured' by digital technologies is also interpretative and can be further transformed by editing and rendering to present arguments and engage audiences for different purposes. This becomes especially obvious when using digital video technologies which involve decision making about sound and movement as well as 'visuals' which are common to still photography. Most heritage practitioners take still photographs for their work. Producing edited video with sound presents additional possibilities, challenges and responsibilities for archaeologists and heritage practitioners – including those surrounding representation and ethics. I will use case studies from my own work to examine some of these issues – which have broader

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applicability in understanding and appreciating the meanings and values of heritage recorded and rendered through digital technology.

Biography

Sarah Colley has extensive experience as a professional archaeologist and heritage practitioner including on digital projects. She has published on public archaeology, ethics and digital heritage. She also makes digital videos about archaeology and heritage.