

## TWO COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS FOR COROPLASTIC RESEARCH

During the Summer School in Catania in May, 2013, two ideas came into focus that could promote coroplastic research. The first was to have a manual, or handbook, that would give the researcher new to coroplastic studies much-needed tools and methodologies for addressing the study of Greek figurative terracottas. The second was to create an on-line version of Franz Winter's *Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten*, 1903, in a wiki format so that researchers can add new coroplastic types or add new sites for figurines already listed in Winter.

These suggestions were made by Jaimee Uhlenbrock as a result of several excellent papers that were presented during the Summer School that discussed methodology. While the archaeological literature that focuses on figurative terracottas is vast, little has been written that could guide a researcher not familiar with the requirements of the discipline. A plan was set in motion by Arthur Muller to have a meeting to discuss further both of these suggestions, and on December 5 and 6, 2013, an American-Italian-French team comprising Marina Albertocchi, Christine Aubry, Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi, Arthur Muller, Marion Muller-Dufeu, Ambra Pace, Antonella Pautasso, and Jaimee Uhlenbrock met in Lille to advance these projects. In addition, Lauranne Montagne, a graduate student at the Université Charles-de-Gaulle-Lille 3, also attended and participated in all discussions.

The text below summarizes the key aspects of the discussions that were held to realize the goals of publishing a handbook for coroplastic research and of instituting an “on-line Winter.”



Photo: Christine Aubry

### I. HANDBOOK FOR COROPLASTIC STUDIES General Principles

- There will be a paper version plus an on-line version in the form of an e-book that can be updated. Contributors to the handbook will write in their native language, with each contribution being translated into English for the on-line version. This is a collaborative project. Drafts will be submitted to everyone on the team for comment.
- The focus will be on Greek figurative terracottas, although it will be stressed that many of the problems associated with research on this type of material are appreciably the same for the figurative terracottas of Egypt, Cyprus, the ancient Near East, and Etruria, among other cultures. The phrase “figurative terracottas” is meant to include figurines and larger statuettes, masks, protomes, reliefs, and plastic vases, all of which are portable and produced for a mass market by either hand-modeling or with the use of the mold. This phrase in general does not include architectural terracottas, plaques, lamps, or molded supports for vessels, although it is understood that in many instances common research approaches can be applied to these categories of objects as well.
- There will be a timeline that will feature Greek figurative terracottas in relation to those of the contemporary civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean.
- The handbook will focus on research methods and tools by means of specific examples that will be accompanied by an extensive bibliography and an objective statement of any discussions and debates in the discipline. These examples also will reflect any trends in research attitudes, but will not be biased in favor of a particular approach or interpretation.
- The audience for this handbook is the researcher who is new to the study of mass-produced sculptural objects made in clay. This may be an archaeologist who uncovers coroplastic material during the course of an excavation or a graduate student who may be assigned a coroplastic topic for research.
- It is anticipated that three years will be necessary to bring this project to fruition. During that time there will be two meetings a year, one in Lille and one in Catania.

### Proposed Outline for the Handbook

#### 1. History of research on figurative terracottas

#### 2. Manufacturing techniques

- 2.1. Modeling
- 2.2. Turning
- 2.3. Casting and derived production
- 2.4. Mixed media
- 2.5. Workshops / signatures

#### 3. Vocabulary

Multilingual Glossary (English, German, French, Italian, Greek), from manufacture to study. The starting point for this will be Arthur's lexicon from the 1997 symposium *Le moulage en terre cuite* in Lille.

#### 4. Working methods

Studying large lots; categories of classification, including thematic, iconographic, geographic, and archeometric classifications; the recognition and establishment of series, the assessment of quantity; graphic and 3-D reconstructions, technical descriptions (production, manufacture), description of clay fabric, including color, texture, and inclusions: types of catalogues, from the fragment to the description of its type. There will be a link to the video *Prises de tête, Coroplathie thasienne* (<http://www.universcience.tv/video-prises-de-tetes-881.html>) that will have English subtitles.

#### 5. Chronology

- 5.1. Timeline Greek terracottas with those from other civilizations in comparative perspective
- 5.2. The theoretical problems of dating figurative terracottas (This can also be placed in 4)
- 5.3. Absolute chronology: brief discussions per site giving firm chronological markers (foundation dates, destruction levels, well-dated votive contexts, well-dated funerary contexts)
- 5.4. Continuity and rupture? At the turn of the millennium BCE.

#### 6. Different approaches

- 6.1. Characterization of workshops by style and/or technique
- 6.2. History of art
- 6.3. The laboratory: archaeometric approaches, including detection of forgeries
- 6.4. From iconography to identification
- 6.5. Figurines in context (votive, funerary, domestic, industrial); their significance
- 6.6. Commerce, trade, distribution
- 6.7. Anthropological approaches
- 6.8. Figurative terracottas in museum collections: as items for exhibitions (what, how, why?), figurines without context, fakes, legal issues, including the repatriation of objects

#### 7. Bibliography

Alphabetical list of bibliographic abbreviations: museum catalogues, excavation reports, general works on figurative terracottas, collective works (conferences, exhibitions), major articles, and references that contain methodology; all references cited in the discussions in the handbook.

## II. AN ON-LINE VERSION OF FRANZ WINTER *DIE TYPEN DER FIGÜRLICHEN TERRAKOTTEN*, 1903

Christine Aubry demonstrated the data base she designed for the terracottas from the excavations on Thasos and Durrës. This was created using FileMaker Pro. With some modification of this module, it could be used as the basis for an on-line Winter.

Below is a summary of the discussions for this project.

- It was noted that the figurines in Winter's catalogue would have to be entered into the module individually. Since this would be very time consuming, it was agreed that many participants would have to be involved. Once the module was established a call for participation could go out to the membership and a username and password would be assigned for access to the project.
- A question was raised regarding the longevity of the program FileMaker Pro. Christine assured us that it is one of the standards for data management and will continue to be supported long into the future.
- It was agreed that the best way to begin this project would be to concentrate on a geographical approach rather than a typological one. In this way the on-line Winter would have a more immediate usefulness.
- A concern was raised about the duration of this project. Will it ever be finished? As the data for this project will be driven by researchers of coroplastic material, it can never be finished, only continually updated.

At the conclusion of the second day of the meeting it was decided that we should meet at the end of May to discuss the progress of our project, or, at the latest, early December 2014.