Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference | University of Chester | 17th – 19th December 2018

Session Organisers: Michelle Scott and Emma Tollefsen (University of Manchester)

Session Format: 1 – Standard Format
(Chair: Michelle Scott / Emma Tollefsen; Discussant: Dr Melanie Giles)

Session Title: Curating the Dead: Manipulating the Body and its Memory

Session Abstract:

The key themes of this session are intentionality and curation in the manipulation of the body in death. From antiquity to modernity, the human body has occupied a difficult and sometimes dangerous space in mortuary practices and the post-mortem translation and transformation of bodies and bones. With a focus on the visual language of the deliberate manipulation of the body and its elements, this session invites papers that take new approaches to the epistemologies surrounding the ancient dead and the social motivations behind the practices of deliberate curation of the dead, in both the past and the present.

In the context of the session, curation is defined as a deliberate alignment for usage within a specific social narrative. Papers might address the pre-burial strategies for halting, arresting and/or managing the effects of death. Papers are equally encouraged that consider funeral rites themselves but also post-burials exhumations and consequent manipulations of a body as well as reburial. This broad definition of ‘curation’ is extended to the ways in which the bodies of the ancient dead are dealt with in the present within museological, institutional and restitutional contexts, including display, interpretation and reburial.

Key words: Curation, Mummification, Osteology, Museology, Burial