



Les Carnets de l'ACoSt

Association for Coroplastic Studies

13 | 2015

Varia

Two Collaborative Projects for Coroplastic Research, II. The Work of the Academic Year 2014-2015

Arthur Muller and Jaimee Uhlenbrock



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/acost/633>

DOI: 10.4000/acost.633

ISSN: 2431-8574

Publisher

ACoSt

Printed version

Date of publication: 5 August 2015

Electronic reference

Arthur Muller and Jaimee Uhlenbrock, « Two Collaborative Projects for Coroplastic Research, II. The Work of the Academic Year 2014-2015 », *Les Carnets de l'ACoSt* [Online], 13 | 2015, Online since 01 September 2015, connection on 22 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/acost/633> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/acost.633>

This text was automatically generated on 22 September 2020.



Les Carnets de l'ACoSt est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

Two Collaborative Projects for Coroplastic Research, II. The Work of the Academic Year 2014-2015

Arthur Muller and Jaimee Uhlenbrock

- 1 An international team of 7 researchers has met for the second and third time to continue a collaboration on two on-going projects that are envisaged as aids for coroplastic research.¹ The first concerns the *Handbook for Coroplastic Research*, a manual that is designed for those new to coroplastic studies. The second project is called *winter On-Line*, which involves the creation of a searchable version of F. Winter, *Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten*, 1903, in wiki format. The team comprises Marina Albertocchi (Ca Foscari University, Venice), Christine Aubry (University of Lille), Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi (CNRS Lille), Arthur Muller (University of Lille / IUF), Marion Muller-Dufeu (University of Lille), Ambra Pace (University of Messina), Antonella Pautasso (IBAM-CNR Catania), and Jaimee Uhlenbrock (State University of New York at New Paltz). Ambra Pace was not present at the third meeting.
- 2 The second meeting were held in Catania, from October 9 to October 11, 2014, when work was conducted on two chapters of the *Handbook for Coroplastic Research*, the chapter “The Historiography of Coroplastic Studies,” and the “Lexicon” chapter. The third of these meetings took place from May 19 to May 22, 2015, in Lille, where work continued both on the *Handbook for Coroplastic Research* and on the project *winter On-Line*.

Handbook for coroplastic research

The form of the publication

- 3 The chapters will be published as they are ready in the language of each of the authors in *Les Carnets de l'ACoSt* and will be available in open access.

- 4 For the eventual book form, all chapters will be updated and translated into English. The *Handbook* will be accessible through the ACoSt website as a free download, as well as through OpenEdition.org. For those who prefer a print edition, a print-on-demand copy can be ordered for a modest fee.

The Work accomplished

- 5 Discussions were held on the best way for presenting a Timeline for Coroplastic Research in both html and print format. Suggestions were made for additional sections to the *Handbook*:
- To Chapter 4. “Working Methods.” Include a section on the digital capture of fingerprints and methods for comparisons.
 - To Chapter 4. “Working Methods.” Include a section on the most effective techniques for photographing coroplastic objects.
 - To Chapter 6. “Different Approaches.” Include a section on the fabrication and identification of forgeries.
 - As an Appendix: Have an annotated list of exhibitions that have featured Greek figurative terracottas.
- 6 Names of additional collaborators were proposed for specific contributions, particularly for Chapter 6. “Different Approaches.”
- 7 A review was made of the revisions of Chapter 1, “The Historiography” by JU. JU suggested that it be published as an excerpt, either in its entirety or in two parts, in *Les Carnets*.
- 8 There was a collaborative fleshing out of the multilingual “Lexicon” proposed by AM in 1997. Improvements were made to definitions, particularly those in English and Italian, and some vocabulary categories were added.
- 9 AnP and MA presented an annotated list of vocabulary references in both Greek and Latin for the various kinds of contexts within which one could expect to find figurative terracottas, such as stips, favissa, bothros, etc.

Winter Online

The Database design

- 10 An informational meeting was held with Professor Marc Tommasi of the Department of Information Sciences at Lille University. Suggestions and discussions were made on the forms that a collaborative and searchable database could take that will be based on F. winter, *Die Typen der figürlichen Terrakotten*, 1903, but presented in a wiki format so it constantly could be updated by interested researchers. Initially this project will comprise a collection of images taken directly from Winter 1903 and a certain number of objective, descriptive terms that serve as identifiers. Eventually, this database could develop into a self-identification tool for classifying new coroplastic types that are either complete or are important fragments. The user will be able to search the database by type, site, date, attribute, etc. There also was some discussion on the

applicability of facial recognition software to the identification of coroplastic types. It is anticipated that this project will be carried out in at least 4 stages:

- Stage 1: Build the directory structure for the database. Considerable work has already been accomplished for this stage.
 - Stage 2: Transform Winter 1903 into a true database that is searchable image by image, unlike the version digitized by the University of Heidelberg.² While this is a very useful digital resource since so few libraries have this book, it is not searchable.
 - Stage 3: Add to the database single, additional examples of the types already represented in Winter 1903 by means of an illustration, if it is of a better quality than that in Winter 1903 and with an indication of the findspot and/or collection of that additional example.
 - Stage 4: Add to the database new types with illustrations, findspots, and/or collections.
- 11 The goals of the project are twofold. The first is to have all the iconographic types represented, including variants, but without references to mould series or mould generations. The illustration of additional types not already represented in Winter 1903 will be by fully-preserved, or almost fully-preserved, examples. These illustrations can be in the form of either a digital photograph or a digitized drawing, especially in the case of a reconstructed terracotta.
- 12 The second goal of this project is the establishment of objective criteria rooted in a directory tree upon which the classification of types will be built. The final link in this tree will be for interpretation, the only part of the directory tree that is not objective.

Theoretical construction of the database

- 13 A group discussion was held on the best way to construct a file for each type. It was decided that each file would have two principal parts:
- 14 The first analyzes each iconographic type according to the following headings:
- Technique (wheelmade / handmade / mouldmade / mixed)
 - Image support (freestanding / relief / plastic vase / mould)
 - Iconographic type, defined by a directory tree based on a hierarchy of objective, descriptive criteria.
- 15 For the most common types of anthropomorphic terracottas the hierarchy of criteria will be:
- The form of the representation (single figure / multiple figures / partial representation)
 - The nature of the representation (anthropomorphic / zoomorphic / mythical / thing)
 - The gender (female / male / hermaphrodite / uncertain)
 - Age (child / adolescent / adult / old / uncertain)
 - Posture / gesture (standing / seated / reclining / crouching / kneeling / flying / etc.)
 - Dress (value list)
 - Attributes (value list)
 - Chronology, in broad terms (Geometric / Archaic / Classical / Late Classical / Hellenistic / Uncertain).
- 16 From level 3 onwards, these criteria are, of course, not always relevant for all branches of the directory tree. For example, criteria 3–7 can not apply to a “thing,” for which the levels 4 and 5 respectively will give a list of families of objects (such as musical instruments / vases / furniture / ...) and lists of objects for each family. Criterion 5 cannot be applied to partial representations (protomes, protome-busts, anatomical

parts). However, for “multiple figures” set at 1, the tree will be multiplied by the number of figures. All these differences will lead to the establishment of contextual menus, conditioned by the choices at certain levels (for example: if 2 = “thing,” then 3 = “object family”).

- 17 The second part of the file analyzes the occurrences of each type with the following headings for each occurrence:
 - Findspot (level 3 of the geographic tree)
 - Number of examples
 - Contexts (votive / funerary / domestic / commercial / industrial)
 - Collection (museum, archaeological site)
 - Publication

Experimental archaeology

- 18 An ancillary part of the last two meetings in Catania and Lille were two excursions that were prompted by a proposal from AM and AnP for an experimental archaeology program that will investigate coroplastic serial production. Two independent, but parallel, experiments, one in Catania and one in Lille, will document the manufacture of certain figurative terracotta types derived from one and the same prototype through several generations. The goal is to verify the physical aspects of serial production at two independent workshops through accurate observations and to illustrate its successive phases as they pertain to definitions proposed for the “Lexicon” of the *Handbook for Coroplastic Research*.
- 19 For the first part of this program the team visited the ceramic studio *Ken Art Ceramica* of Gaetano Grifò in Centuripe, Sicily, last October. This is a studio that reproduces mostly ancient Greek vases and terracottas in a manner closely aligned to that of the ancient Greek originals, and these reproductions are manufactured in local clay using historical techniques (See the on-line catalogue www.kenart.it) (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Gaetano Grifò with one of his modern reproductions of a bust from Morgantina.



Photo: Jaimee Uhlenbrock.

For his own work, Grifò generally models clay prototypes and then makes plaster moulds from these prototypes. From these moulds he produces numerous casts in clay. Grifò does not practice surmoulage because of the inevitable deterioration in the quality of the successive generations. For our experimental program, however, Grifò agreed to change his manner of working by modelling three prototypes in clay: a protome, a theatrical mask, and a figure of Artemis. He then made clay moulds from these prototypes (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Moulds made by Gaetano Grifò.



Photo: Thomas Nicq, Halma-UMR 8164 (Univ. Lille, CNRS, MCC).

In this way preparation was complete for an eventual mass production as it would have been practiced by ancient coroplasts. The terracotta types chosen for this experiment present two levels of difficulty in the casting and especially in the release of the cast from the mould. The first level involves the simple, frontal moulds for a protome and a mask, while the second level of difficulty involves a double, or bivalve, mould for the Artemis figure, since the back of the figure is detailed. These moulds will be used in Lille to produce first generation terracottas, from which second generation moulds will

be made. The scope of the experiment is then to continue production of the 3 series in parallel in Lille and in Catania.

- 20 The second excursion took place this past May. The team visited the Archaeological Museum of Bavay (*Bagacum Nerviorum*), which is next to the largest Roman forum in Gaul. The museum has at its disposal an electric kiln that is used for pedagogical activities. It is there that the products of the Lille contingent of the experimental program will be fired.
- 21 Unrelated to the experimental program was another excursion that was made by AM and MMD, with JU, to the Archaeological Museum of Oise, which has on display an important exhibition of Gallo-Roman terracottas that were recovered during excavations of the Roman site of Vendeuil-Caply in 2013 (See the notice by Adrien Bossard in this issue).
- 22 The next meeting of the team is scheduled for the third week of November 2015 in Catania.

NOTES

1. See *ACoSt Newsletter* 11, Winter 2014, 32–33.
2. digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/winter1903

AUTHORS

ARTHUR MULLER

Université de Lille, Halma, IUF

JAIMEE UHLENBROCK

Department of Art History, State University of New York, New Paltz