

Techniques, senses and emotions during prehistory

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The study of use wear traces on archaeological tools and objects permitted to reconstruct several activities within prehistoric settlements, such as food processing and craft productions (metal, leather, stone...). Sounds, melodies, smells and flavours related to these activities have also been considered.

More specifically the study of food processing tools permitted to identify a variety of cereal meals, their texture and flavour. The study of toolkits permitted to reconstruct workshops organisation, as also skills of prehistoric craftsmen. We have shown that prehistoric craftsmen moved out with their own toolkits. During the Bronze Age (3000 -1000 BC), this mobility permitted technological transfers within the eastern Mediterranean, such as stone drilling processes. These skilled and mobile craftsmen, created polished surfaces, equal or superior in quality to actual ones, produced by mechanised processes. By combining ethnographic and archaeological data our study has shown that polishing conveys senses and emotions and requires developed sensory abilities. Traditional craftsmen measure and think with their hands. The texture of the surface, neglected in archaeological studies but also in museums, appears as an essential component of the object. These results stimulated the introduction of new experiences in Museum exhibitions where visitors are invited to discover sensory properties of archaeological surfaces.