



The Dark Abyss of Time: Archaeology and Memory (Archaeology in Society)

By Laurent Olivier

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The field of archaeology continues to face a major crisis of interpretation. The traditional view is that the basic business of archaeology is to reconstruct the history of cultures and civilizations through their material productions. Olivier challenges this view with a new approach to archaeological remains based on the works of French theorists such as Foucault, de Certeaux, and Derrida, with insight from Darwin and Freud. His thesis is that archaeology does not study the past itself but rather what materially remains of the past in our present. Olivier also develops an interpretation of material culture based on Aby Warburg's and Walter Benjamin's work in the anthropology of art. With wider implications for history and all social sciences, The Dark Abyss of Time is a major contribution to the theory of time, memory, heritage, and archaeology. This flawless translation makes Olivier's elegantly written work available in English for the first time.

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Editorial Review

Review

The Dark Abyss of Time is ... one of the most important works published in archaeology during my lifetime. It fundamentally questions the purpose and practice of the discipline as it is today, and successfully tries to move us beyond the sterile debates that have marred the history of archaeology for the last thirty or so years. It is the result of a wide and deep immersion in the roots of our current culture, and it is, to boot, beautiful to read! (Sander van der Leeuw Ph.D, Arizona State University)

This is a wonderful work, a rich and very human treatment of how we experience time and history in our relationships with vestiges of the past. It is an inspiring read in the critical tradition of Bergson and Benjamin that will appeal to everyone interested in our contemporary and archaeological fascination with old things. (Michael Shanks, Omar and Althea Hoskins Professor of Archaeology, Stanford University)

About the Author

Laurent Olivier is curator of the Department of Celtic and Gaulish archaeology at the National Museum of Archaeology in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, outside Paris. He teaches at the École du Louvre and the École pratique des hautes études. He is working on a dig on the site of Iron Age salt marshes in Marsal (northeastern France).

Arthur Greenspan is a professor of French at Colby College.

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