
THE OLD POTTER'S ALMANACK

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

This June issue of *The Old Potter's Almanack* covers three diverse topics: refractories for casting, advanced methods of porosity analysis in ceramics, and a large-scale project on early Neolithic ceramic analysis.

Paul Craddock offers a comprehensive overview of the functional role of ceramics for casting metals, moving from India to Africa and Europe. He focuses on early crucibles and fabrication techniques used from the initial phases of metallurgy. He describes technological processes involving the use of clay moulds and cores, from early lost wax casting processes, and the evidence for these techniques which can be identified studying the clay moulds. While these clay bodies must always have the physical and thermal properties required to resist heat, the variation in their composition over time demonstrates how casting techniques are embedded in cultural traditions.

Sobott, Bente and Kittel illustrate porosity, an important and often overlooked aspect of ceramics. Pores in fired-clay objects provide data on specific surfaces and permeability and can be studied using different techniques, depending on their sizes. The authors consider tools which have been used less frequently than the classical method of optical microscopy, such as X-ray micro-computed tomography, mercury porosimetry and Brunauer-Emmett-Teller methods. Their approach could be used to characterise ceramics in order to contribute to identifying products from different workshops, to detect variability in firing temperatures (e.g. proto-porcelain and porcelain) and to suggest differences in intended function (i.e. permeability of the vessels).

Clop, Estrada and Salanova introduce a collaborative project for a large-scale study of early Neolithic pottery from different regions of the Mediterranean Basin. Using primarily the results of thin-section analysis, the authors focus on persistence and change in the use of tempering agents, related to cultural groups, stressing how long-lasting traditions of ceramic manufacture are strongly tied to regional areas.

This month the department of Conservation and Scientific Research of the British Museum moved to its new location in the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre (WCEC). This is the first major new scientific and conservation building at the British Museum in nearly a hundred years. Although we will miss the quirky old building at 39 Russell Square, the WCEC hosts some of the most advanced facilities for archaeometric research and conservation studies (but not – yet – porosimetry!).

Michela Spataro

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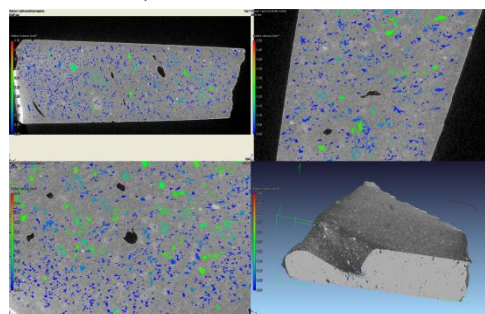
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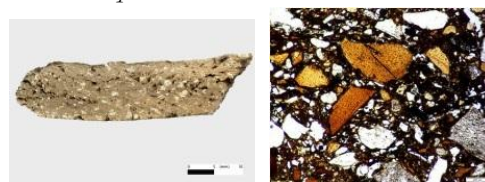
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