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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

CRAFTER: Reviving Bronze Age Pottery in EU-funded Project

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The CRAFTER project aims at reviving modern-day artisanship by drawing inspiration from pottery traditions of four of the most remarkable Bronze Age societies of Europe: El Argar (south-eastern Spain), Únětice (Central Europe), Füzesabony (eastern Hungary) and Vatin (south Serbia).

Common to several societies of Bronze Age Europe was the manufacture of burnished drinking vessels and other high-quality tableware, which became central to new ways of

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commensality (e.g. Dietler 1996: 106). This last word, which literally means 'table-sharing', is well in line with the goal of sharing common spaces and values which characterises the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH). A project named *Crafting Europe in the Bronze Age and Today*, CRAFTER for short, will draw inspiration from Europe's Bronze Age pottery to help revive modern-day artisanship. CRAFTER arises in the framework of Creative Europe, a programme connected to the EYCH that aims at making Europe's cultural heritage a shared resource and reinforce the sense of belonging to that common European space. To achieve this, Creative Europe focuses on projects aimed at making cultural heritage a source of inspiration for contemporary creation and innovation. Two reasons, equally in line with the aims of the 2018 EYCH, justify the focus of CRAFTER on manufactured pottery. First, it is severely endangered as a skill and trade, as a result of industrialization and modern consumption habits. In general, only potters who manage to re-invent their trade manage to survive. Second, pottery is a wealthy source of archaeological, historical, aesthetic and scientific values.

CRAFTER will be developed from July 2018 till December 2019 by a partnership of eight organisations from five European countries: Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary and Serbia. These organisations are: the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the City Hall of Mula (Spain), EXARC (The Netherlands), the Halle State Museum of Prehistory (Germany), the Déri Museum of Debrecen and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Hungary) and the Hometown Museum of Paraćin (Serbia). At the head of the partnership is the Asociación de Amigos del Yacimiento de La Bastida (ASBA), i.e. "Friends Association of the Archaeological Site of La Bastida".

ASBA is a non-profit organisation from Totana (Spain), a locality known as "City of Potters" (*Ciudad Alfarera* in Spanish), and is devoted to the dissemination and protection of the Early Bronze site of La Bastida. Not incidentally, La Bastida was one of the main centres of El Argar, a society which controlled much of modern-day south-eastern Spain, between 2200 and 1550 BC. El Argar is an important milestone in Western Europe's Prehistory. In addition to significant urban and technological developments, this society introduced sharp social distinctions unseen in the previous Copper Age (Lull 1983; Lull *et al.* 2015). One of the characteristic aspects of El Argar is the fact that its ceramic production consisted essentially of eight vessel shapes, which were manufactured with a high degree of homogeneity during approximately six centuries (Siret and Siret 1887; Lull 1983). Importantly, amongst the members of ASBA is a local Totana potter who has experimented with recreating handmade Argaric ceramic vessels with significant success (See main Figure).

The first event of CRAFTER will be an international meeting between potters, archaeologists and other cultural heritage professionals. They will share knowledge, perspectives and experiences, with the goal of generating a set of synergetic skills and strategies that will assist potters in recreating ceramic vessels of the four regional Bronze Age cultures of Europe that inspire CRAFTER. The event will take place at the City Museum of Mula (Spain) in autumn 2018, therefore highlighting the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

This meeting will propel the second stage of CRAFTER, in which four potters from Spain, Germany, Hungary and Serbia will draw on their skills and experience to (re)create ceramic vessels representative of some of the most remarkable Bronze Age societies of Europe. In addition to the abovementioned El Argar, these include Únětice (Central Europe), Füzesabony (eastern Hungary) and Vatin (south Serbia).

The third line of action is parallel to the second, as it will consist of capturing the process of recreating the Bronze Age ceramic vessels in four documentary films. Visual arts, didactics, and storytelling will be combined in order to show to a broad audience the revival and re-invention of an ancient craft. To cite a particular case, ASBA will resort to (pre)historical re-enactment for its own production on the recreation of the eight Argaric pottery shapes. A potter will act and re-enact prehistoric processes of manufacture, showing actions, gestures, and techniques that characterised the craft in the past (some of which continue to this day). We believe this approach is ideal for the educational and dissemination goals of CRAFTER. As stressed in a recent contribution to this journal, a well-thought re-enactment with ties to real-life experiences has the potential to inspire audiences and motivate thinking and debate about the past, as well as its significance for the present (Krstović 2018).

The results of the three actions described thus far—shared knowledge, pottery recreations and films—will be shared with the public in the fourth event. This will be a gathering that will take place simultaneously in four museums in four of the countries participating in CRAFTER: the City Museum of Mula (Spain), the Halle State Museum of Prehistory (Germany), the Déri Museum in Debrecen (Hungary) and the Niš Museum with the Hometown Museum of Paraćin (both Serbia). Each event in each country will showcase the same elements: the sets of pottery recreations for each of the four Bronze Age traditions, the four documentary films and explicative panels. Other educational and communication elements will be displayed alongside the latter, for instance samples of raw materials (such as clays and non-plastic elements) or replicas of tools used by potters in the manufacturing process. Potters will also be invited for an open event where they can manufacture pottery live and show their trade to the public.

The fifth major goal of CRAFTER is to turn the experiences acquired by the potters in the context of the project into an opportunity to revive their trade. Our project is about sharing cultural heritage, preserving it, and finding innovative ways to make a sustainable tourism

around it. To achieve this goal, the project's final commitment is to make the ceramic reproductions available at museums and online shops, in an effort to open a market for these new creations.

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Country Germany
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Spain
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