

THE STUFF OF LIVES: **MATERIALITY** IN CULTURE & ARCHAEOLOGY

SATURDAY, MARCH 19TH 8:30AM-5PM
UBC ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIOLOGY BUILDING

Where would archaeology be without things? Archaeology hopes for, perhaps even expects, a simple relationship between people and their stuff, usually mediated by some concept of culture. The more we ponder this arrangement, the more data we collect, and the more we hear from people who live with stuff, the less clear this relationship becomes. Things appear to have 'agency', 'social lives', 'affectations'; they exist in 'entangled' 'hybrid' 'distributed dividuals'; they are vessels of power whose influence engenders ethnocentrism. Our speakers for this event come from within and beyond archaeology, exploring methods, interpretations, conversations, and implications of the role of things in life through the archaeological lens: what can we know about people when all we have are their things?

KEYNOTE SPEAKER CHARLES LECTURER BERNARD KNAPP THE WAY THINGS ARE...

Appadurai's edited volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986) first sought to highlight multiple ways in which 'things', like people, have active social lives, even biographies. Since then, this train of thought has taken multiple turns, and gone through many diversions and amplifications to, amongst others, agency, materiality and object agency, the 'cognitive life of things', human-thing 'entanglements' and 'symmetrical' archaeology (i.e. the 'New Materialisms'). The end result appears to be a sweeping critique of 'anthropocentricity', in which it is argued that the archaeological study of cultures need not have any reference to humans, whether agents, individuals, subjects or collectivities, but instead must focus on the nexus amongst things. Things, then, are not just tokens or surrogates for human act or activities, but rather act as material agents in their own right. Taking some materials from archaeometallurgy -- specifically that of Bronze Age Cyprus as known from regional archaeological survey and excavation -- as my point of discussion, this talk critiques the notions of 'material agency' and considers the cultural biography of metallurgical 'things', seeking to separate the chaff of materiality from the wheat of material culture.

This event is organized by the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies and the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. It's open to anyone with an interest in archaeology. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Inquiries about the event should be directed to Dr. Andrew Martindale at andrew.martindale@ubc.ca or Dr. Kevin Fisher at kevin.fisher@ubc.ca

Special thanks for the sponsorship provided by Calhoun's Catering and Biercraft UBC.