

# The Art of Making project: Capturing the Meaning of Ancient Roman Sculpture

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## Introduction

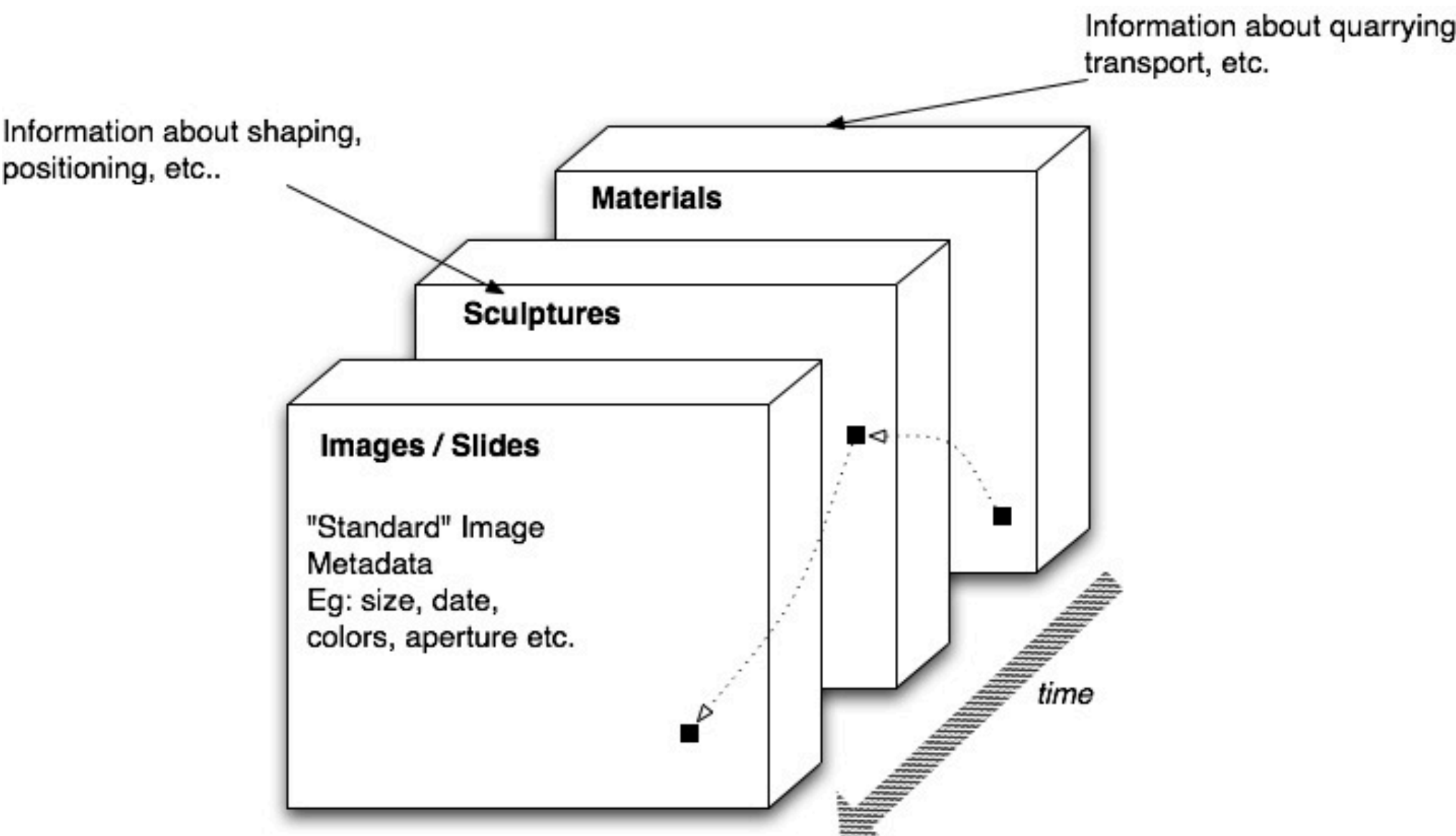
The “Art of Making in Antiquity: Stone Carving and Carvers in the Roman World” ([http:// www.artofmaking.ac.uk/](http://www.artofmaking.ac.uk/)) is a two-year project funded by the Leverhulme Trust which started in July 2011. The project develops an innovative approach to Roman sculpture by interpreting carving techniques through the lens of practical craft expertise.

In particular, the project aims at building an innovative web resource around an unpublished photographic collection assembled by Peter Rockwell, a sculptor and expert on stone carving. The project is concerned with the relationship between mark and tool but, as importantly, with the sequence in which the marks were made. The aim is to enhance our understanding of the physical sculptural process and to investigate the relationship between the surviving objects and their makers.

## Approach

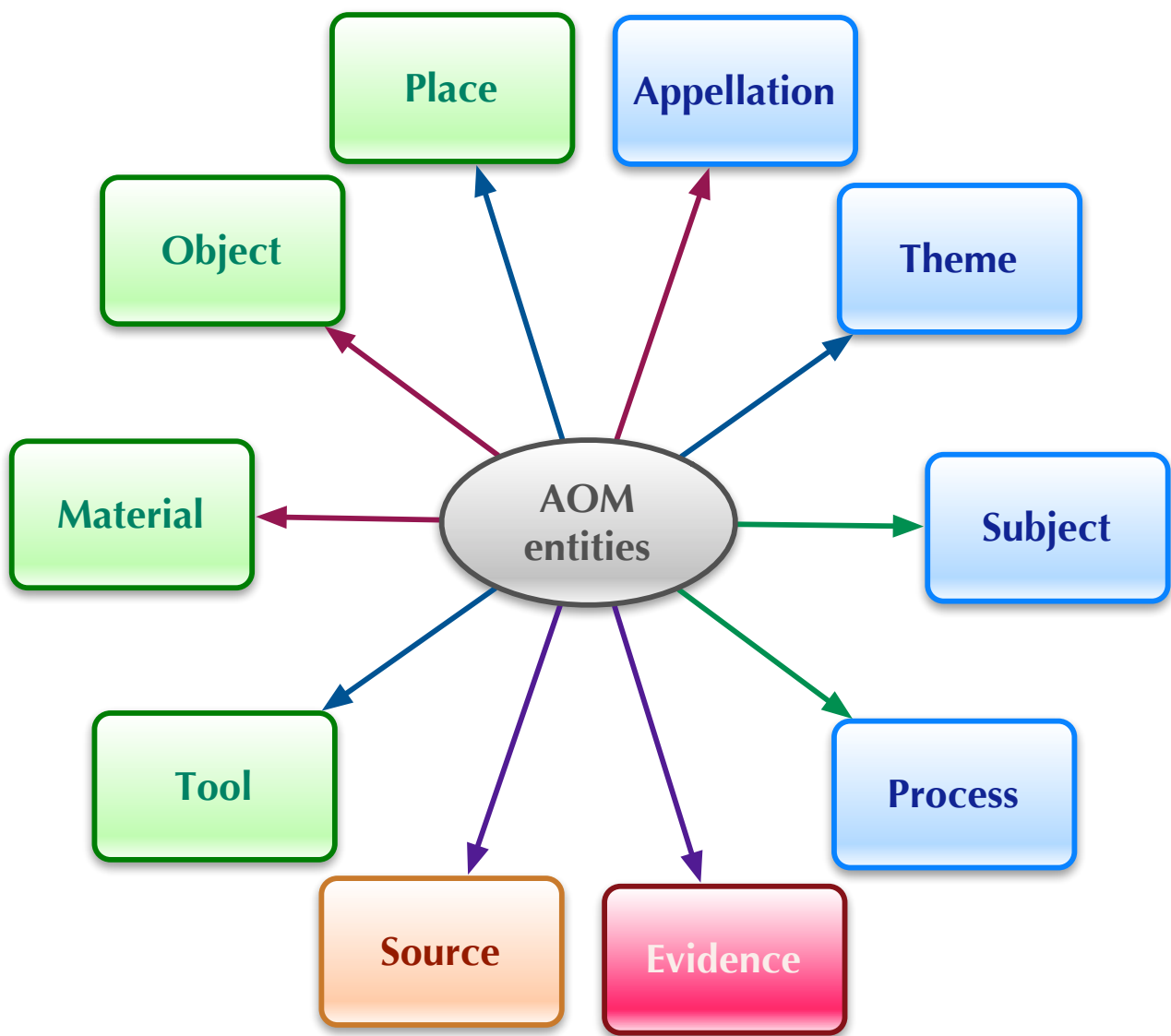
The Art of Making constitutes a different approach to most studies which group tools separately, thus failing to show how they might be used in the course of a single piece of work. This attention to process is extended yet further by including quarry sites, thus visualizing the actions from material acquisition to the completed object.

From a digital humanities perspective, such an approach implies using data capture and representation methodologies that go beyond the standard metadata for describing images or cultural heritage objects (such as Dublin Core or Getty vocabularies). In fact, although these well- known metadata schemes could provide us with a quick solution to the problem of classifying the subject and features of an object (so to support better searches online), they tend to offer an overly simplified (i.e. ‘flat’) characterisation of the object identity.

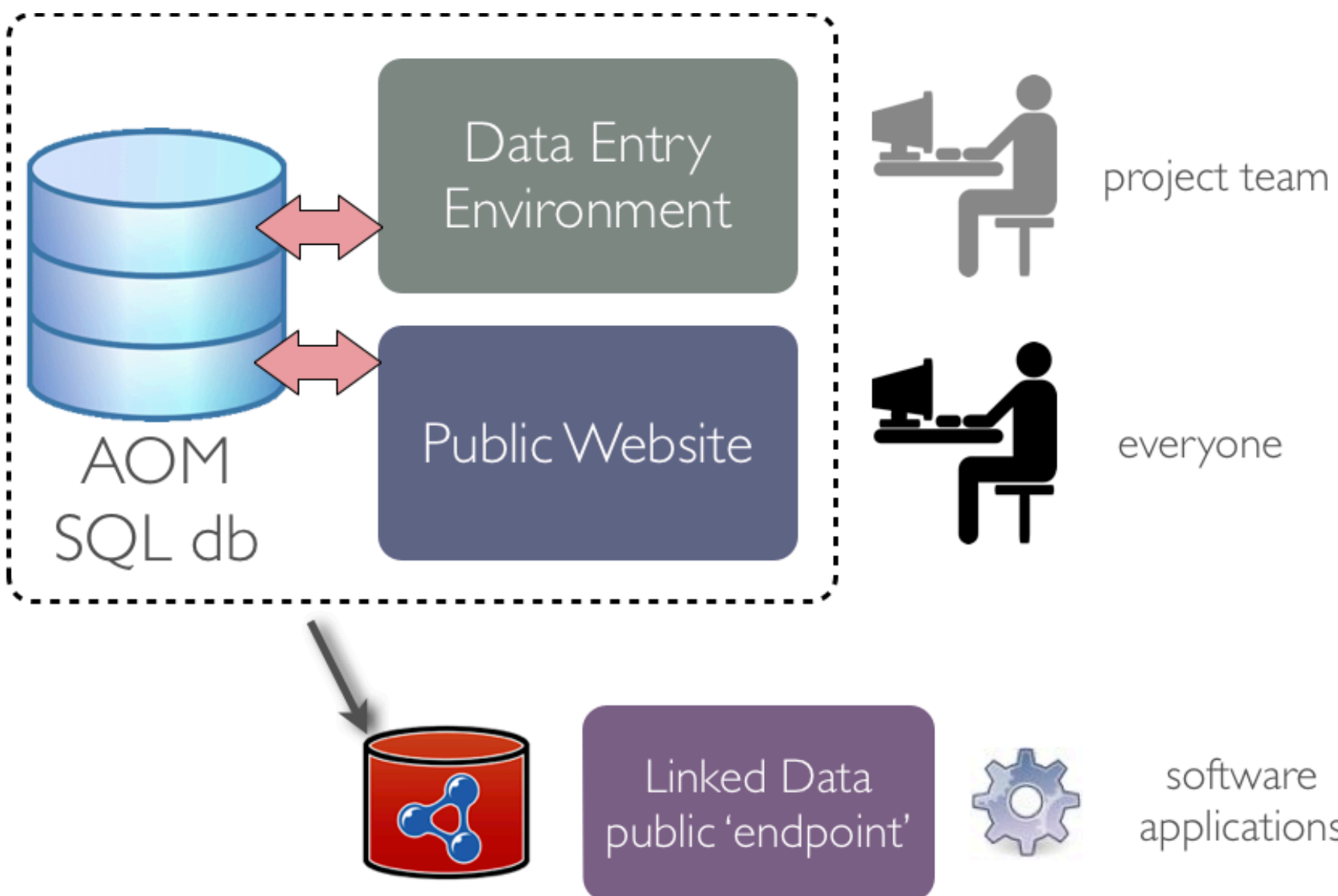


## DH Challenges

We could argue that standard metadata schemes are less suited for representing the more ‘historical’ dimensions of a cultural heritage object, that is, the network of decisions and contextual circumstances that have determined its creation and existence as we see it nowadays. It is precisely this rich historical dimension that we aim at making explicit instead: by means of a more elaborate and detailed computational model of the sculpture domain, the Art of Making web resource will let users explore questions concerning the materials and processes typical of Roman sculpture, the specific carving techniques being used, their role in the sculpting process and the recognizable traditions emerging from such practices.



Currently we are completing the first phase of the project, which involves the digitisation and manual annotation of more than 2000 slides from Peter Rockwell’s archive. The relational database and data entry system we are using relies on a customised version of the popular Django web-application framework (<http://www.djangoproject.com>). We will release the database contents to the public in the first half of 2013. The website will feature a number of advanced mechanisms for interrogating and visualising the data, together with means to access the data programmatically based on Linked Data principles.



The screenshot displays the 'Administrative Interface' of the project. It includes sections for 'Change Source', 'Objects', 'Subjects', 'Slide metadata', 'Image metadata', and 'Evidence for Working Processes'. The 'Evidence for Working Processes' section shows a table with columns for 'Evidence', 'Process', 'Tool', 'Method', 'Order', and 'Description'. It lists two entries: one for 'Detailing (Finishing, Carving)' using a 'Flat Chisel' and another for 'Detailing (Finishing, Carving)' using a 'Drill'. A large pink arrow points from the 'Evidence for Working Processes' section towards the right, where there are images of stone carvings.

