



Fig. 1 Slavic Days in Warsaw. ■

Experimental Archaeology in Media

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● The author, who is a co-writer of number of documentary series concerning experimental archaeology, presents an overview of the presentation of archaeology in the Polish media: TV broadcasts from archaeological shows, documentary series and educational multimedia packages.

Introduction

During the development of such a relatively young science as archaeology, the conception of experiment has changed. From the simple clarification of the function of tools and ways of constructing equipment and buildings

through physical-chemical analysis up to complex reconstruction processes capable of gaining, aside from quality data, concrete quantitative data related to performance, efficiency and other limiting factors. We have gone from subjective descriptions to repeatable experiments

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and computer simulations.

Somewhere along the way the custom of presenting the results of experiments to the wider public was born. At the beginning the public audience was not numerous and was random in nature. Over time experiment has methodically called the public in to participate – especially when erecting buildings or working with stone blocks. A special role in the making of experiment generally accepted belongs to the expeditions of Thor Heyerdahl. Their preparation and progress was followed by the whole world, through a media campaign in the press, radio and television. Since the 1950's great experimental actions are unthinkable without the presence of media.

The Phenomenon of an Archaeological Festival

Archaeological shows have become a common method of popularizing archaeology. It is a result of popular acceptance by visitors and the relatively low organisation costs. A snowball effect in the rise of the number of archaeologists carrying out shows, is a response to the needs of organisers for mass displays. Many cities and towns want to add archaeological shows to their festivals. It isn't without an influence by the growing 'knight' movement and the ambitions of local leaders to create their own brotherhoods. Even organisers of political rallies often try presenting to the public beside pop groups and barbecues, 'living' archaeologists carrying out 'living archaeology'.

Personally I do not like the description 'living archaeology' in relation to what it does. It smacks of trickery, shows of bearded women and fire-eaters. If all archaeology was connected to dead bodies, would it be necessary

to advertise the attractions as shows of living dead bodies?

In Poland experiments on the scale as the Kon Tiki expeditions of Thor Heyerdahl were not carried out. The presence of media also was not a norm. Then the situation changed when new forms of open-air spectacles, generally called an archaeological festival, appeared. It is a branch of the science complementing theoretical studies and excavations. The beginnings of archaeological experiment date to the end of the 19th century. In recent years experiment has developed further gaining much interesting information and verifying a number of myths.

Experiments carried out in the presence of the public were a prototype of modern archaeological shows. Some still use the term experimental archaeology when speaking about public shows, but that is a bit of an exaggeration. Experiment is always the basis of the shows, but the show itself is not an experiment in the correct sense of the word. We reconstruct ancient methodologies, develop technologies, practise and later we demonstrate what we learn. If we demonstrate honestly and skilfully, the spectator feels they are a witness of something authentic.

The first case of an archaeological experiment being recorded by television in Poland was a display that happened in 1990 in **Krzemionki Opatowskie** in the archaeological preservation of area of a Neolithic quartz mines.

From the late 1980's archaeologists from the State Archaeological Museum, Warsaw carrying out excavations in Krzemionki, organised in the first days of June, public shows of ancient technologies for tourists visiting the excavations. Shows in 1990 were prepared earlier and announced in the

press and by posters in the region of Ostrowec Świętokrzyski. Four institutions participated in the preparations: the Archaeological-Historical Museum in Ostrowec Świętokrzyski, which organised the shows and prepared the programme of visiting the mining area and the tourist paths, the Polish Tourist-Regional History Society responsible for guiding within the area of the preservation, the State Archaeological Museum Warsaw and Archaeological Institute of Warsaw University who carried out the archaeological shows. Tourists visiting the preservation that day (there was nearly 2000 of them) could watch methods of making quartz tools and learn about the ways they were used. The male part of the public of various ages had a chance to penetrate into the secrets of the production of hunting weapons and equipment and tried its efficiency in practise. The fair sex watched with interest the results of the use of natural dyes giving woollen yarns various colours. They could also weave from the yarn a sample cloth on a vertical wooden loom. At a neighbouring stall, shows of pottery making methods used in the Stone Age took place. These were very popular among the youngest visitors.

The shows took places over two days and the broadcast from the display appeared in the regional television on the morning of the second day. It is difficult to evaluate its effect on the numbers but it is without doubt that the doubling of the number of guests visiting Krzemionki on the second day was a result of the television broadcast.

The Krzemionki shows highlighted a great interest by the public in such sorts of entertainment and contact with the past. They also showed that the most successful organisation of shows is where the public can actively



Fig. 2 Festival Wianki in Warsaw. ■

participate. Direct participation is the best way to appropriate new 'old' skills and understand the distinctions of use of ancient tools. At times the clumsiness of the participants raised laughter from the public, but also taught a better understanding of the conditions of the life of our ancestors.

Displays in Krzemionki in the first days of June took place until mid 1990's. They were followed by other displays of a similar type organised at the beginning as an emergency in **Biskupin**, which caused the birth of the idea of the foundation of a nationwide Polish archaeological festival in the place which is a symbol of 'Polish experimental archaeology'.

With the increase of interest from the public, archaeological festivals also attracted the presence of the media. Developing local television companies exploited archaeological presentations for visitors as an illustration of open-air displays which sometimes caused an impression that the whole of Poland participates in archaeological entertainment. Displays with the presence of archaeologists were becoming so popular that the demonstrators sometimes lacked free dates. Every place claiming ancient traditions wanted its own show of knightly wars and ancient crafts. This

situation and the necessary amendments due to the demands of the media caused a decrease in the quality and professionalism of the presentations, accompanied by low quality in the production of authentic props used for shows. It also stopped experiments being carried out in front of visitors and instead became a sort of media show for the public on the spot and in front of television screens.

Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is the biggest archaeological display of its kind – the **Biskupin Festival**. I took part in the first four festivals as a presenter. In the following two as a group organizer; generally only as a representative of the State Archaeological Museum – co-creator of the display. Changes in the character of the shows and slow transformation of the display into a sort of fair and street theatre made many archaeologists resign from participation in the following years of the festival. In 2002 I also resigned from participation in the festival. I think that after the period of increased interest of media in archaeological shows, a satiation is gradually coming and with it a change in the forms of broadcasting from such displays. In 1996 together with Gerard Sawicki, a journalist from the first channel of TVP, I produced a broadcasting from the festival, within the series **'Robinsons'**, prepared for Educational Television. A year later a similar report was prepared for the second channel of TVP by reporter Angelika Uziębło. Shorter or longer programmes were made in the following years but documentary programmes are not made any more (at least I do not know about them and I follow broadcasting from archaeological displays very carefully).

The medial success of the Biskupin Festival, benefited a number of smaller

and bigger archaeological actions in the whole country. During a normal year employees of the State Archaeological **Museum in Warsaw** organise six large open-air displays and receive invitations for seventeen others starting from Wolina and Gdańsk and finishing at Jelenia Góra and Tomaszów Lubelski.

Archaeological shows have also become a way to arouse the interest of local governments on local archaeological heritage. Skilfully advertised shows taking place at the surrounding of a forgotten hill fort or barrow cemetery have brought to daylight forgotten elements of the cultural landscape. I participated in creating new history for places such as a hill fort on Zawód at Kalisz, an early medieval fort in Sopoty or a cemetery in Szawcaria pod Suwałkami. Impetus produced by archaeological shows and their great popularity brought the interest of government, an influx of funds for research and protection and sometimes also for reconstruction or exhibition works. Such sites existing on cultural maps became a credit to the local societies. At these places archaeological shows take part with the support of locally grown archaeologists and archaeological fans.

But there are also dark sides to the mass interest in archaeological shows. The calendar of displays got so crammed that there is no way to take part in all the meetings of this kind. Very often professional executors of the shows, with appropriate knowledge and skill, are also lacking. Sometimes it finishes by employing people at random, people with nothing in common with experimental archaeology at all. Unprepared spectator might not notice any special difference, especially if it is their first contact with archaeological shows. But archaeology is a discipline



Fig. 3 Biskupin Festival. ■

gaining a great number of committed supporters. These amateurs penetrate the riddles of the ancient past with an enthusiasm worthy of professionals. It is not possible to present them with substitutes instead of the practical science. It becomes uncovered and leaves an aftertaste of underestimating those to whom the show are dedicated and who are the most important people in the enterprise. Will archaeological shows protect themselves against a decline into trash and pretensions of a reality of past centuries? I think this is inevitable. The fashion of 'living archaeology' will pass away, but an interest by a certain part of the public will stay, loyal but demanding. I dream of a return to the beginning of the phenomenon, to authentic interest: without numerous groups of holiday makers, flooding archaeological villages like the raids of barbarians (after such meetings it is often not possible to find half of the exhibits which took weeks of work to prepare). And everything in the loud setting of music (Para Celtic),

which on its own is very interesting both as music and as phenomenon, but in the combination with the razzmatazz of some shows makes me feel sick.

I think that every mass phenomenon (and we can certainly speak about mass phenomenon in regards to archaeological shows) has its development phases. The uncontrolled explosion of interest, which causes an evident decline of the level of presentation, has to happen. Now it is time for the self-repair mechanism by educated professional archaeological presenters and the birth of professional societies, uniting people working in a specific form of popularization work. The natural base for such work would be secured by institutions working in the protection of archaeological heritage and archaeological education. Here I think of museums, which connect research, protection and education work.

Increases in the presence of experimental archaeology in the electronic media is on one hand connected to the

growing popularity of archaeological festivals among the public, on the other to the searching for an identity by local authorities, which are using folk, knight, court traditions or mix of these in all possible variations. And displays without any report on television from practical politician of any level view is an unsuccessful display.

It sometimes means that unusually superficial reports restrict themselves to snapshot presentations of single archaeological activities. Half of the problem is solved if the group allows an organizer of the display or someone from the archaeologists to speak. More often though journalists themselves will comment on what they serve to the spectators and then it is possible to expect anything – from getting the wrong era of the show, through to confusing facts or misnaming the centre which prepared the experiments.

All the time I have been speaking about true archaeological experiments. As I said above there are many of them, but their percentage declines with an increasing demand for displays. Amateurs, archaeological fans and all those, who want to show anything which might interest the public, stand up for archaeological shows. Spectators want archaeology: they get archaeology or something which reminds them of it. Therefore the differentiation between archaeological experiment and archaeological display. People dressing in various periodic costumes (not always adequate or even anachronic, but often eclectic) are not always professional archaeologists engaged in experimental archaeology. For an average visitor or a random TV maker they will though be specialists on the past able to do what an average Kowalski cannot do and what they connect with archaeology.

Therefore the reluctance of myself and my colleagues to change into so called costumes 'of the time'.

I never change for archaeological shows and do not persuade colleagues unless the organiser of the display comes with an unconditional demand. Even then I try to bring to their the attention the fact that we are not pretending to be Stone Age people but show how they made their tools, built houses and gained livelihood. In the show where we compromise, we take on assisting students sustaining for ourselves a 'civilian look' of archaeologists. Television journalist are especially tiresome, they film only those in costumes and arrange spectacular scenes. That is the result of 'news' setting of general TV makers, who have to find within a moment some speed and sensation. My media look is a result of position of firm compromise. Crumpled hat, jacket and jeans are costume consciously following the look of the most famous archaeologist – Indiana Jones created by Stephen Spielberg. I do not pretend to be a prehistoric man; I talk about his life from the point of view of an archaeologist. I am not dressed completely 'normally' which satisfies the journalists. These are practical clothes, used not only by me for field work. I used to wear them every day; it therefore comes relatively easily to me to transform myself into a media archaeological look, especially for an experimenter.

That is all on the topic of media and archaeological festivals.

Experience of Archaeology in a Film Document

Documentary programmes based on archaeological research, including experiments are a completely different stream.

The first documentary film exploiting elements of experimental archaeology, in which I participated, was the film **'Górnicy krzemionkowscy [Krzemionki Miners]'** (dir. W. Nidzicki TVP) made in the area of the quartz mines at Krzemionki Opatowskie in 1983. Its format did not include costumes and dramatisation as it was in the cult film on Krzemionki 'Prastary skarb [Ancient treasure]' by scriptwriter T. Żurowski ⁽¹⁾. The film by Nidzicki contains several experimental scenes concerning working lime rock, quarrying quartz, transportation, explanation and finally quartz working.

Following this approach to archaeological document was one fully dedicated to experimental working of quartz as part of a popular documentary series from the 1980's **'Sonda [Probel]'** (dir. K. Kamiński, Z. Kurek, A. Pyć). The heroes were the tools of a man and their making. In the case of quartz tools the person was Witold Migal, at that time just starting as an experimenter. 'Sonda' was an educational initiative of television after the martial law, but it was a really good programme. It was broadcasted at the best time, about five o'clock, very often was advertised and very well made. Both moderators made provisions for the many-sidedness of the problems touched upon in the programme, which did not restrict itself to an illustration of dictated ideas. Scientific experiments were an inseparable part of the narration and their results were sometimes the reason for scientific mini-discussions. The interest of 'Sonda' in archaeological experiment was in a way a promotion of this branch and it acted later, in the 1990's, as a reference when asking for



Fig. 4 Archaeological Fair in Pultusko. ■

broadcasting time or funds for making our own programmes.

We are now getting to the moment when I write about myself. At one time I was a co-writer (together with Gerard Sawicki from TVP) for several series made for PR 1 TVP – Educational Television and Children Television. As with many other initiatives this one was created by chance. A visit on excavations by a TV reporter, who got interested in the work of an archaeologist and the ways of reconstruction the past, especially by experiment. Because he was himself, by profession, a geographer and scientific work was not alien to him, scripts for the documentary programmes were created which gave a chance for factual broadcast without pretending and stretching the facts beyond interpretation.

⁽¹⁾ In this black and white document made by army documentary studio 'Czołówka' also scenes of making quartz axes appears but it is not an experiment when instead of the archaeologist (B. Balcar) doing the quartz knapping it was done by an extra who did not know what he was doing.

In one year short 15 minute long programmes were created, called '**Robinsonowie przyrody [Nature Robinsons]**' dedicated to single inventions, especially from the Stone Age. The heroes were: the bow, axe, hand axe and pottery. It contained acted scenes and commentary by archaeologists. The spectators liked the programme and this gave us the chance for further productions.

The second series was ten half an hour films made in the format of a document containing composed scenes, shot out-of doors. The topic of single parts were for example: making tools, building a house, hunting, gaining plant food, its preparation and storage, treating skins, making clothes and so on. The accepted format needed beside commentary by presenter and archaeologist also showing the described technology in practise. In the accepted format, the work was done by an archaeologist made up as a man of a given period, that meant me. It was very exhausting especially because I am not an actor and I had to act without falling into the trap of mannerisms. The equipment we had was ridiculous, not only generally, but also from the time point of view. One camera, several folding lamps, a microphone on a pole and no people to help on the spot. Thanks to good work and the dedication of the group, we could make up for these technical deficiencies. All the props were made by us with Gerard Sawicki and Witek Migal. I had to learn to do all the works. On the top of everything Gerard showed to be a person intolerant of any shortcuts. *"If you are saying that they did it this way, then we have to do it this way"* was his answer when I sometimes suggested using modern tools of camera to speed up shooting. As a result we were trying

everything until everything went well while changing conditions, proceedings or methods to the most effective ones. Films, which showed how it might have been, were created. Every 'patent' described in the programme was tested in practise and if something was arranged then it was because of the maliciousness of the dead objects which occasionally caused a fiasco of an experiment.

I am able to say that the series 'Robinsonowie' was successful. We received letters from spectators, met our fans on shows and the department ordered 10 more parts for the following school year. During holidays the programme was repeated by TV Polonia.

Following this the programmes were created every month not over one but two years finishing with a holiday series '**Traperskie lato [Trapper's Summer]**' where a group of children under our supervision went rambling supporting themselves with what they learned from our earlier programmes. In this series it was not a professional archaeologist using methods recognised from archaeological or ethnographical data. It was a different, interesting way of learning about nature and us, our limits and abilities.

I was enormously (and I hope not only me) enjoying making both of the series. I fulfilled my dreams of being an American Indian, trapper, shaman, miner quarrying for quartz. I shot from a bow, built boats, slept in a hut and all of this I had to do for real. Only my hair and underwear were non-prehistoric. I refused to give up my underwear – in worry for the spectators, of course. The shooting was full of adventures, sometimes dangerous (being stamped on by a horse, turning over in a log-boat on the Biskupin Lake in winter or setting a stone avalanche in a quarry) but even these only added to the adventure.

After enjoying ourselves with the 'Robinsons' we decide with Gerard to make a serious series about the birth of humans '**Ścieżki z Raju [Paths from Eden]**'. We thought about it as a document with composed elements; it went a step further on the scale of shooting. We received better equipment and more funds which allowed us to engage extras (students of archaeology) and choose places illustrating the topics (all the trips had to be restricted to regions of our country). We could exploit cooperation of professional designers and make-up artists, a simply completely different quality.

The format of the programmes was based on presence of two presenters of slightly different views discussing the stages of the development of humans (an idea borrowed from the mentioned 'Sonda') transferred to the climate of the discussed period and meeting groups of people made up to the period and using ancient technologies. Overall it was presented lightly, often referring to scenes from Indiana Jones by Spielberg and in my opinion it was our best effort. We visited with the camera many authentic places and archaeological sites. We presented the way of life of the Stone Age people from the first hominids up to colonisation of both the Americas. We ended the series with the appearance of working fields and breeding animals. We received in *Gazeta Wyborcza* a review as vitriolic as it was incompetent. The design of the part on the mammoth hunters was criticised, scenes which originated in the film '*Quest for Fire*' which received Oscar for make-up. The fact that we were allowed to use scenes from the film counts as a great honour on its own as in the connection of possibility to use the music from '*The Last Mohican*' to il-



Fig. 5 Festival in Czesko. ■

lustrate very successful hunting scenes from the part on Mesolithic hunters. We planned a follow up to '*Paths from Eden*' but organisation changes and financial cuts made shooting of such, from the design point of view, a demanding series impossible.

Experimental Archaeology and Survival Craft

At the end of 1990's so called '**survival craft**' became fashionable in Poland. An adult hobby based on various forms of extreme scouting. Groups and clubs of people spending their leisure in 'non-civilised' conditions, within nature, relying only on their knowledge or various gadgets sometimes based on films about special troops were founded. Among the number of various forms of survival, the branch based on exploitation experiences of American Indians presented in literature by an excellent expert of this form of entertainment Marcel Mirse is popular.

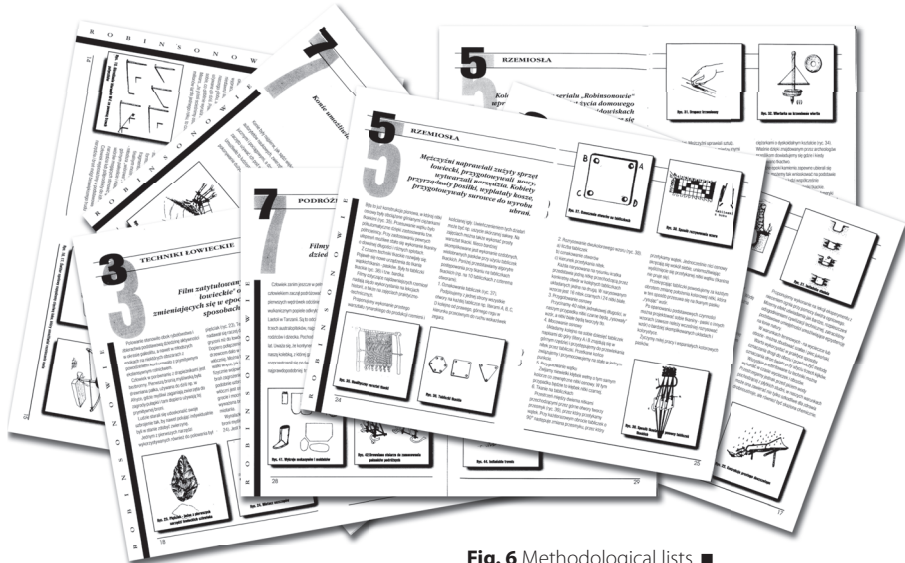


Fig. 6 Methodological lists. ■

Gerard Sawicki (himself Mirse's fan) decided to exploit this interest and present 'survival craft' using technical advances of the Stone Age people. A series of programmes called '**Łowcy ognia [Hunters for Fire]**' was created. In the environment of Polish forest two rambles who lost their equipment decided to exploit the situation and continue on the way supporting themselves with survival methods. One of them used the most modern equipment in the area of extreme tourism (miniature and self-build objects, super-resisting synthetic clothes, concentrated rations and so on). The other would on the other hand exploit the richness and stores of the surrounding nature. Starting from making clothes and the basic tools from wood, bone and quartz through to gaining food to building a home and transport. The confrontation without any pretensions looked very interesting.

Recently commercial and also state television has changed its look. Instead of morning educational programmes they show a series or documentary films produced by foreign TV companies. The mission of the educational broadcasting

going since the 1950's has been broken. I do not believe that it has been fully substituted. The popularity of programmes by popular-scientific channels like National Geographic, Discovery and Planet contradict it. Also the interest in repeats of old programmes contradicts it. Besides renewing propositions of scripts of educational programmes on experimental archaeology we cannot rely for ever on shooting new ideas. Lately we were offered a reality show with youths where a hidden camera would be filming them spending time outside fulfilling task given to them by presenters, including from experimental archaeology. We rejected the idea because we are not interested in programmes of this type and making something against our inclinations would show on the screen.

Future – Multimedia packages

Several years passed from the premiere of our films on Educational Television. The ministry of Education within the bounds of contract signed with Polish Television earmarked a number of documentaries for publishing on video to enrich the educa-

tional offers for school children. A General Educational Videolibrary was created with packages of educational programmes on various topics.

Within the videolibrary there appeared two multimedia packages with our films: **'Robinsonowie 1 [Robinsons]' and 'Ścieżki z Raju [Paths from Eden]**. Both packages contain besides two videos, methodical lists for teach-

ers and learners making use of the films easier (widening the topic, describing problems touched in single films, further reading and a dictionary of terms). In the situation of the collapse of educational role of public television as we see it in Poland, at least such form of preservation and accessibility of family media products from all the educational area is successful, not only in archaeology.

Summary

Experimentelle Archäologie in den Medien

In den letzten Jahren sind archäologische Show-Veranstaltungen eine übliche Methode der populärwissenschaftlichen Vermittlung von Archäologie geworden. Ein Prototyp der modernen archäologischen „Show“ waren Experimente, die in Anwesenheit des Publikums durchgeführt worden sind. Das früheste Beispiel einer solchen Form von Aktivität wurde für das polnische Fernsehen 1990 in Krzemionki Opatowskie aufgezeichnet, ein Festival das später durch das bekannte landesweite Polnische Archäologie-Festival in Biskupin ersetzt wurde. Mit Zunahme des öffentlichen Interesses erhielten die archäologischen Festivals auch eine erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit von den Medien. Der Erfolg des Festivals von Biskupin bei den Medien förderte auch an anderer Stelle eine ganze Zahl von kleineren und größeren archäologischen Aktionen und unterstützte die positive Einflussnahme auf die örtlich zuständigen Behörden in Hinblick auf die Erhaltung des archäologischen Kulturerbes. Auf der anderen Seite führte das verstärkte Interesse zu einer größeren Kommerzialisierung und in manchen Fällen auch zu einem Qualitätsverlust.

Der erste Dokumentarfilm, der vollständig der Experimentellen Archäologie gewidmet war, zeigte die Bearbeitung von Quarz und war Teil einer beliebten Bildungsdokumentationsreihe mit dem Titel „Untersuchung“ („Probe“) in den 1980er Jahren. Später arbeitete der Verfasser zusammen mit Gerard Sawicki als Ko-Autor an verschiedenen Serien für das Bildungs- und Kinderprogramm im Fernsehen, die erste davon bekannt als „Robinsons Natur“. Die Dokumentationsreihe war einzelnen Erfindungen, speziell aus der Steinzeit, gewidmet. Eine andere Serie mit dem Titel „Wege aus Eden“ behandelte die Entwicklung des Menschen, eine weitere, „Die Jäger des Feuers“, nutzte das Interesse an Überlebentechniken durch einen Vergleich von urgeschichtlicher und heutiger Zeit. Zwei der Serien („Robinsons“ und „Wege“) wurden später als Multimedia-Bildungspakete herausgegeben.

Archéologie expérimentale dans les médias

Dans les dernières années, les festivals archéologiques deviennent une manière habituelle de populariser l'archéologie. Le prototype d'un festival archéologique moderne, c'étaient des expérimentations exécutées sous les yeux du public. La télévision polonaise a enregistré ce type d'activité la première fois en 1990, au cours du festival à Krzemionki Opatowskie qui a été remplacé, un peu plus tard, par le festival réputé - Festival archéologique national de Pologne à Biskupin. L'intérêt du public croissant, les festivals archéologiques ont attiré un intérêt excité des médias. Un succès public énorme du festival de Biskupin a profité à bien des actions archéologiques, petites ou grandes, et il aide à influencer les municipalités au sujet des monuments archéologiques régionaux. D'autre part, cet intérêt exacerbé a entraîné également une certaine commercialisation et quelquefois une baisse en qualité.

Le premier documentaire tout consacré à l'archéologie expérimentale a visé la taille du quart et il a fait partie de la série de vulgarisation scientifique „Sonde“. Plus tard, l'auteur de l'article et Gerard Sawicki ont collaboré à la création de quelques séries télévisées éducatives et pour enfants, dont la première „Robinsons de la nature“. Cette série a été consacrée à différentes découvertes, en particulier à celles de l'Âge de pierre. Une autre série, „Pistes sortant du Paradis“, a traité de l'évolution de l'homme et „Chasseurs du feu“ ont profité de l'intérêt pour „survival craft“ en comparant les technologies préhistoriques de survivance et celles les plus modernes. Deux des séries (Robinsons et Pistes) ont été plus tard publiées sous forme des sets éducatifs multimédias.