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The Chaîne Opératoire: Past, Present and Future

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With its intellectual roots planted firmly in French ethnography, the *chaîne opératoire*, or 'operational chain', functions as a powerful framework for interpreting the manufacturing process, use, and eventual deposition of archaeological material culture and artefacts. A previous edition of the ARC in 1990 was the earliest English language publication to discuss the *chaîne opératoire* and disseminate its use in archaeology to an international audience. Since then, the framework has become a well-established and widely utilised analytical tool, having expanded from its initial utilization within lithic studies to applications involving ceramics, rock art, textiles, figurines, jewellery, metalwork and many other kinds of material culture. In the process, it has also fruitfully engaged with various other related concepts and perspectives, including object biography, craft tradition and technological processes, social relations, labour organization, genealogies of production, and socio-cultural identity. Three decades since the original publication, this ARC issue will offer a reappraisal of the current status of *chaîne opératoire* within archaeology, and in particular will assess how it is being used to both find new answers to old questions, as well as develop entirely new lines of enquiry into the relationship between material culture and varied social processes.

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Ella is a bio-archaeologist currently residing in Cambridge, U.K. Through her research she has gained a passion for archaeological and anthropological illustration. Most of her work is focused on anatomy, particularly the skeletal structures of humans and other mammals. She works as a freelance artist alongside her academic research, and has produced cover art for podcasts as well as digital illustrations for use by research projects in both biological anthropology and archaeology.

Prints are available on request and can be viewed via Instagram at: [@ejm.illustration](https://www.instagram.com/ejm.illustration)

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She is available for commissions and is always keen to work on projects that connect science and art.

