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YOUNG ACADEMY DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

PREHISTORY IN A NEW LIGHT

TOM HIGHAM*University of Vienna***KATHARINA REBAY-SALISBURY***University of Vienna & Austrian Academy of Sciences*

Prehistoric archaeology is no longer just the macroscopic study of fossils and material relics discovered from the human past; methodological advances in ancient genome, proteome and isotopic studies have provided the discipline with a toolkit that has brought breathtaking insights into aspects of past people's lives that were unimaginable only a few decades ago.

The Young Academy Distinguished Lecture Series brings cutting-edge scientific topics to the public, presented by a distinguished expert and a member of the Young Academy.

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In this dialogue, Tom Higham and Katharina Rebay-Salisbury will introduce the new interdisciplinary archaeology to a wider public with two specific case studies. Tom Higham will talk about earlier periods of prehistory in which more than one human species inhabited Eurasia and outline how Neanderthals, Denisovans and Homo sapiens may have interacted.

Katharina Rebay-Salisbury will present results from early Bronze Age Austrian cemeteries (ca. 2000 BC), from which we obtain detailed insights into gender and kinship relations as well as aspects of mobility and disease.

The discussion – moderated by Christoph Bock, member of the Young Academy, Professor of Medical Informatics at the Medical University of Vienna and principal investigator at CeMM – will focus on how our picture of the past has changed in the last decades, and these new insights can contribute to addressing the challenges of the modern world.



© Tom Higham

Tom Higham is Professor of Scientific Archaeology at the Department of Evolutionary Anthropology, University of Vienna, having moved to Vienna in 2021 after heading the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit of the University of Oxford for two decades. His research areas include radiocarbon dating using accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS), compound-specific radiocarbon sample preparation and pretreatment chemistry, and establishing archaeological chronologies.

His interest in the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic periods of Eurasia focusses on encounters of Neanderthals, Denisovans and anatomically modern humans; his research seeks to better explain the question ‘where people came from’ and build a picture of the late period of human evolution, in particular exploring aspects of the prehistory of Homo sapiens over the last 50,000 years and how we became human.



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Katharina Rebay-Salisbury is Professor of Prehistory of Humanity at the University of Vienna and directs the research group ‘Prehistoric Identities’ at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Enthusiastic about the European Bronze and Iron Ages, she is interested in combining interdisciplinary approaches for insights into people’s lives, identities and social relations in prehistory, and discussing cultural and contextual information on an equal footing with bio-archaeological data. Her collaborative approach to the human body includes the application of bio-archaeological science applications such as aDNA and isotope analysis, histology,

TCA and proteomics to shed light on the lives of prehistoric people. Her current research explores themes such as sex and gender, motherhood, kinship, mobility and migration through ERC- and FWF-funded projects analyzing burial contexts and human remains from Central Europe. In 2015 she was awarded the ERC Starting Grant for the project ‘The value of mothers to society’, and in 2016 she was elected a member of the Young Academy of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. With her habilitation in 2017, she was granted teaching rights at the University of Vienna, where she was appointed as professor in February 2023.

This event will be held in English.

We would like to inform you that photos and film recordings (image and sound) will be made during the lecture.