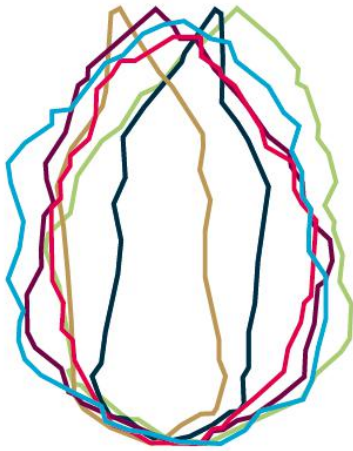


MONREPOS – A MUSEUM IS REBORN2

July 11, 2014 Sonja B. Grimm Day of Archaeology 2014, Education, Museum Archaeology, Prehistory, Public Archaeology archaeological conservation, food, guided tours, Marketing, Mesolithic, museum, palaeolithic, team work



Monrepos

Archaeological Research Centre and Museum
for Human Behavioural Evolution

Back to the museum – what happened? Five years ago the German government created an economic stimulus package meant for the construction industry to pass through the worldwide finance and economic crisis. With money from this package public buildings could be renovated and our house, the princesses palace, was chosen as one of these projects.



However, that meant we all had to move out, in particular, the museum. So the museum was closed for the public and the research centre squeezed into the corners of the house that were currently not under construction. That were cosy but also hard times!

Afterwards we had new windows, new floors, new heatings, new rooms, new kitchens, new guest-rooms – really lovely working here now! A prove for this pleasant atmosphere could be the help we received from Saxony-Anhalt: Juliane Weiß M.A. got into contact with our institute through the Upper Palaeolithic excavation at Breitenbach, a project of our colleague Dr. Olaf Jöris. Juliane subsequently visited Monrepos and since we found out about her amazing cooking and baking talent, we invited her to prepare an Old World Stone Age buffet in our lounge kitchen for our guests on Monday.



With, Juliane's delicious help, we can explain at least one of our current research themes straightforwardly to every guest: Diet and Nutrition... Looking at the hazelnut biscuits, I'm sure everyone agrees about the importance of this topic for human behaviour.

Since everything around and within the building was so nice and new, the museum exhibition was also intended to make a fresh start. Unfortunately, the money from the government wasn't intended for that and, hence, couldn't be used for creating a new exhibition. Therefore, other money had to be found for new shelves, new lights, new signs etc. and a fresh concept for our old stuff. Likewise our research centre, the museum is focused on how human behaviour developed in the past 2-3 million years and creating a new concept for this really old story of mankind isn't that easy! And to be honest, most archaeologists are no museum designers, psychologists focused on flows and requirements of customers, business project organisers, marketing experts etc. But all these skills are needed to make a really good and interesting museum. In our case, we decided to get help from outside our archaeology box and, consequently, many hours in the last years were spent by some researchers, first of all our head, Prof. Dr. Sabine Gaudzinski-Windheuser, learning... Learning about marketing strategies, customer psychology, about digital possibilities in museums, concepts other museums use etc. and finally finding a way to apply all this newly acquired knowledge on our very old exhibition material.

After this concept was created, it needed to be realised. Our regular staff was accompanied by photographers, designers, craftsmen, carpenters, electricians and many others during the last year. Occasionally, the great ideas meant for the museum had to be adapted to the possibilities and / or the budget. Still most of the ideas could come true.

So here we are Friday July, 11th – countdown is running for the exhibition opening next Monday at 1:30 pm...

Frank Moseler M.A. is going to run the museum. Today he accepted what felt like 100 phone calls with bookings for guided tours through the museum for the next weeks. Besides this organisation, he is preparing scripts for regular and the professional guided tours and, just by the way, he tries to finish his dissertation about the use of fire in the Upper Palaeolithic at our research institute. In the museum, he is supported by Edda Perske who is organising the receptions desk and museum shops, while Michael Bernal Copano is preparing for supervising the museum rooms. They both struggled with getting to know

the electronic till system today – certainly, not an everyday task at a museum but something that is used everyday and, therefore, has to be understood.

Besides the archaeologists, our museum will have special action tours. In these tours, professional actors will help the visitors to understand how humans created faith, home, and world trips or how humans need and use power. Before taking the visitors on this journey to self-awareness, the actors themselves had many questions to the archaeologists. Dr. Radu Ioviță took some hours of his time to walk with them through the museum and answered all their questions, informed them about methods, and explained how we can learn something about human evolution from looking at stones, bones, and profiles.

For some further refinements of our exhibition, we have received help from our parent institute in Mainz during the last days. The RGZM is well known for its [archaeological conservation workshops](#) which among others worked on finds from the Chinese province of Xi'an, Ötzi's equipment, or the world's oldest wooden spears from Schöningen. Currently, some of the archaeological conservators from the workshops go everyday on the long way from Mainz to Neuwied to help us reviving the past in our exhibition.

Our museum is not just taking the visitors from the present to a past time, we are also trying to connect the inside of our house with the outside. This is not just figurative of opening research and science to the public but also very literally:

Inside the museum we have a little wishing well for which our Prince Maximilian of Wied-scholarship holder, Elisabeth (Elli) Noack M.A., and our trainee Nicola Scheyling M.A. created a counterpart outside our museum: the "wishing tree".





Usually, Elli doesn't climb trees at Monrepos but writes her dissertation about Mesolithic archaeozoological material from northern Germany. However, at the moment the museum is our prime priority and today Elli and Nicola decorated the tree and hang up schist plates from the tree. People can engrave their wishes for the future in these plates. A first wish has already been engraved in the schist plates – and it's such an obvious wish right now...no! It's not about the museum – first things first: "World Cup!"

Well, probably many of us will watch the match together on Sunday night, while still preparing and cleaning the exhibition for Monday – hopefully, no goal for Germany while someone is handling a fragile piece...

Comparably to the German football team, I can formulate the baseline of this post that not just relates to making a museum but also to archaeology in general as the next post will show:

You need good players but in the end it's all about team work!