

AIA

NEW YORK SOCIETY NEWS



THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Our Lectures Will Take You Around the Globe

It's a New Year and I hope that everyone had a pleasant and enjoyable holiday season. The AIA's Annual Meeting was held this year in San Francisco and we have a busy New York Society season coming up. The fall started with three well-attended interesting lectures on a wide variety of topics, and our spring lectures bring us an equally broad examination of work currently being undertaken.

The winter/spring lectures will start in February with a lecture by Sebastian Heath on Roman amphitheaters, illustrating among other things how he has been using new technologies to understand these monuments. Patricia McAnany, will give this year's Brush Lecture focusing on Maya cultural heritage. Michael Parker Pearson, always an engaging speaker, will update us on recent work at Stonehenge, and finally Richard Hunter will bring us back home to explore some local New York City archaeology in his work in Central Park. As always I'd like to thank Hunter College, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and St. John's University for providing space for these lectures. Without the collaboration of these organizations we would be hard pressed to find venues to hold our lectures. Likewise, we are most grateful to all the individuals who make our lectures possible by providing funding. A special thank you this season to Ms. Caroline Howard Hyman, one of our Friends, for sponsoring Michael Parker Pearson's lecture.

As many of you know there can always be slight changes of venue and schedule so be sure to check out our website (<http://aia-nysociety.org/events>) to

be sure of times, dates and locations. As always, all lectures are free and open to the public and do not require an RSVP. Bring your friends along.

At our annual meeting in September we welcomed two new board members, who bring a wealth of experience: Adam Watson and Edward Krowitz. Ogden Goelet was also elected to a second term as VP. The New York Society is a volunteer organization, and we thank them for their service.

Once again our thanks go out to Jeff Lamia for all his work organizing events and otherwise curating The Friends of the New York Society. This smaller group of dedicated and generous members are vital to our society. We are most grateful to all the members of the Friends (listed on page 3, below) for their generosity to the New York Society; their support allows us to offer the events that we do beyond the two lectures we receive from the National AIA office. If you are not currently a Friend, please consider joining them to further assist us in our activities.

The New York Society works hard to bring you a varied program of lectures and smaller Friends events, but if there are other events you would like to see us sponsor, stop and talk to a board member after a lecture. As you will see in the following pages we have a great lineup of lectures for the winter and spring come—so bring a friend and enjoy interesting lectures, good discussions and the company of your fellow society members.

- Paula Kay Lazrus
President, AIA New York Society

AIA NEW YORK SOCIETY LECTURE SERIES FOR SPRING 2016

February 4, 6:30 (Refreshments to precede lecture at 6:00)

Narrative Approaches to Counting Roman Amphitheaters

Sebastian Heath, Clinical Assistant Professor of Ancient Studies, New York University

(Co-sponsored by the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World)

15 East 84th St., ISAW

By the Second Century AD, well over 200 amphitheaters had been built within the territory of the Roman Empire. The most famous of these, the 50,000+ seat “Colosseum” in Rome, is also among the most unusual by being the largest and most complex amphitheater around. While the crowds watching gladiators and animals fight, as well as criminals being executed, were huge at Rome, in Italy’s smaller cities and in the Empire’s provinces they could be very much smaller. This paper explores the diversity in the size and capacities of amphitheaters by emphasizing the visualization of their spatial distribution. This in part means making maps, but also making use of modern tools for representing and exploring large data sets. When the capacities of amphitheaters are totaled, it is likely that there were over two million seats available for watching all the activities that occurred in these uniquely Roman structures. That large number provides one avenue to a nuanced understanding of the role of amphitheaters in creating and maintaining the territorial and political stability of imperial Rome.

March 21, 6:30 (BRUSH LECTURE; reception to follow lecture)

Maya Cultural Heritage: How Archaeologists and Indigenous Peoples Create and Conserve the Past

Patricia McAnany, Kenan Eminent Professor of Anthropology, University of North Carolina

(Co-sponsored by the Institute for Study of the Ancient World)

15 East 84th St., ISAW

Situated at the intersection of cultural heritage and local community, this lecture enlarges our understanding of indigenous Maya peoples of southern México and northern Central America by examining their relationship to a much valorized but distant past. Highlights are presented of grass-root cultural heritage programs located in southern México, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras that were conceived in collaborative style and implemented over the past eight years. These programs emphasize participatory research methods and a style of pedagogy that de-centers the production of archaeological knowledge. Central to this effort is cultivating a closer relationship between ethno-linguistic Mayan communities and the practice of archaeology as well as the objects of archaeological study. The compelling need for an effective grass-roots approach to heritage conservation has been another guiding principle of these programs. The dialogue that is encouraged by such heritage programs is building new epistemic communities of archaeological practice in which collaboration between indigenous Maya peoples and archaeologists result in the creation and conservation of the past.

April 21, 6:30 (Refreshments to precede lecture at 6:00)

Stonehenge: New Research

Michael Parker Pearson, Professor of British Later Prehistory, University College, London
(Supported by Ms. Caroline Howard Hyman)

Chanin Language Center Screening Room (B126 HW), Hunter College, Lexington & 68th Street

This lecture will provide an introduction to the archaeology of Stonehenge and the different theories about who built it and why. In the last ten years there has been a huge increase in the amount of information on Stonehenge gathered by archaeologists relating to its surrounding landscape, its stones and its people. One of the biggest mysteries—why some of Stonehenge’s stones came from over 200km away—is currently being researched and may help to answer the question of why Stonehenge was built.

May 5, 6:30 (Refreshments to precede lecture at 6:00)

The Pre-Park History and Archaeology of Central Park—Some Recent Discoveries

Richard W. Hunter, President/Principal Archaeologist, Hunter Research, Inc.

St. John’s University, 101 Astor Place, Room 105

Over the past quarter century, the Central Park Conservancy has supported numerous archaeological explorations in that exceptional rectangle of urban recreational land under its care in the heart of Manhattan. It may come as a surprise that the creation of the Park in the late 1850s and early 1860s, and its subsequent upkeep, have far from removed all trace of earlier land use within its limits. Historical and archaeological studies performed both in advance of landscaping improvements and as pure research endeavors have revealed unexpected evidence of Central Park’s pre-park history. The Kingsbridge Road (the old post road from New York to Albany and Boston), the military installations of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the occupation of the early 19th-century African-American and Irish settlement of Seneca Village, and the surveying of the Manhattan street grid by John Randel—there are tangible below-ground expressions of all of these and more in Central Park’s archaeological record. This talk offers a brief illustrated overview of recent archaeological discoveries within the Park placing them in their historical and modern contexts.



Friends of the New York Society

The Friends of the New York Society are a group of archaeological enthusiasts who generously support all the programs of the AIA-New York Society.

Friends (\$175-\$249)

Clyde Adams, Elizabeth Bartman, Linda Getter, Dana Ivey, Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis & George Lewis, Robert & Joan Rothberg, Joan & George Schiele, Ethel Scully, Barbara Sexton, Anna & Robert Taggart, Constance Thatcher, Jessica Weber, plus four anonymous donors

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Whitney & Fred Keen, Lorna & Ronald Greenberg, Jeffrey A. Lamia & Elaine H. Arnold

Patron (\$1,000 up)

Caroline Howard Hyman

NEW YORK SOCIETY INITIATES A FIELD WORK SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP

On February 3, 2015 the New York Society Board of Trustees approved a New York Society Archaeological Field Work Scholarship. The scholarship is \$1,000 to cover some of the costs of a student, matriculating at an accredited college or university within the five boroughs of New York City, to participate in an archaeological field work school. Students majoring in archaeology or related disciplines are especially encouraged to apply. The scholarship is for junior and senior undergraduates and first-year graduate students only. Applicants must be at least 18 years old and must not have previously participated in archaeological field work of any kind.

The scholarship committee considers both academic achievement and financial need in its deliberations. The scholarship is open to students from all backgrounds.

The New York Society Field Work Scholarship follows the guidelines and requirements of the AIA national's Waldbaum Scholarship except that eligibility is only for students matriculated at New York City accredited colleges and universities. The Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field Work Scholarship was established several years ago to honor Past-President Jane C. Waldbaum.

For more information, requirements and forms, please consult the National AIA's website (<https://www.archaeological.org/grants/708>). Also for additional information or questions please contact Deanna Baker, Membership and Societies Administrator, AIA, Boston.



FEATURE: DISCOVERING HOMO NALEDI *A First-Hand Account of an Extraordinary Find*

In the fall of 2013, I was working with the American Museum of Natural History on St. Catherines Island, Georgia. I loved the Museum, and the island we were working on was beautiful, but fieldwork would be ending soon and I was on the lookout for my next job. I came in from the field one day and saw a posting on Facebook, and the words “caving”, “climbing”, and “South Africa” jumped out at me. Lee Berger was asking for archaeologists with extensive excavation experience, as well as caving and climbing abilities, to come work for him in a cave in South Africa. I grew up caving and climbing, and I had a lot of excavation experience in some challenging circumstances, particularly the digs I had been on with the Museum over the past five years. On a whim, I applied for the job. Two weeks later, I was packing to leave for Johannesburg.

When I landed in South Africa in Early November,

I only had a few pieces of information. Lee had relayed how two recreational cavers had found a deposit of skeletal material inside one of the most remote chambers in the Rising Star cave system, in the Cradle of Humankind. He believed the remains could potentially be the most complete hominin skeleton ever discovered. However, this small chamber, now called the Dinaledi chamber, was so difficult to access that Lee himself could not fit through some of the passages. His goal, therefore, was to find a team of qualified excavators who were slender enough to reach the Dinaledi chamber and recover these fossils. Over the coming days, I would meet the other five scientists who would become colleagues and friends: Becca Peixotto, Alia Gurto, Elen Feuerriegel, Marina Elliot, and K. Lindsay Hunter, all of whom happened to be women.

The journey to the Dinaledi chamber involves

crawling through Superman's Crawl, a short tunnel less than 25 centimeters high, climbing vertically up a 20 meter underground ridge called Dragon's Back, and then descending through a narrow, 12 meter vertical chute that narrows to 18 centimeters (approximately 7 inches) wide at one point. This is not the kind of journey one can make with traditional archaeological excavation equipment, so we would be using a 3-D scanner to record the exact location and context of every piece of bone that we removed. The scanner is about the size and shape of an iron, and uses two cameras and a white strobe light to "paint" an area and capture enough pictures to develop a 3-D image. This scanner allowed us to document these remains with sub-millimeter accuracy, and it would also allow us to re-create the excavation and even the cave itself.

On November 10th, 2013, we were finally ready to go underground and begin removing fossils. There were over 60 people involved in the expedition, including a huge number of cavers and other volunteers, and on that first day, the cavers spread themselves out at key points in the journey to help us. Marina left first, followed by Becca about 15 minutes later, and then it was my turn. We had been through several "dry runs" in the cave, even climbing up to the top of Dragon's Back and the entrance to the chute, but none of us had actually been down the chute. As I left the surface, I smiled and waved at everyone in the Command Center, and ran down the hill to the entrance of the cave. I took a couple of steps out of the sunlight, and in the cool, dry air of the cave—and out of sight of the cameras—I stopped. It was quiet in the cave. I stood there for a few moments, preparing myself and letting some of the adrenaline that was pounding in my ears dissipate, and then I hurried down the first narrow hallways and through Superman's Crawl. I put on my harness and clipped into the safety ropes, and climbed up Dragon's Back. Then, at the top of the chute, I got into position and waited for Becca to clear the bottom.

The first time that I made my way down the chute, there were a lot of bruises, scrapes, ripped clothing and cursing. I had to find that one exact way that my body would fit down through this space, and not dislocate anything in the process. In some places the walls were so close together that I had to

turn my helmet sideways to make it fit down. At the very end, my chest was lodged in the last crack and I was exhaling slowly, lowering myself inch by inch into the chamber. My legs were dangling beneath me, trying to find a hold on the wall to support my weight. I got one foot on the cave wall, and then I was in the Dinaledi chamber. As the days passed and I made this journey over and over again, there were less bruises, and I developed almost an intimacy with the cave. There was a routine, and a mental map, to every place that my hand or foot would go inside the chute. Rather than feeling trapped, it was closer to feeling held.



Excavators were monitored from the surface on video screens in the Command Center.

The next few weeks were a blur of activity, and remarkable discoveries. By the end of the expedition, we would have excavated the remains of more than 15 individuals, from infants to elderly adults. We had multiple elements from almost every part of the body, which will tell us much about the growth and development of these hominins. We didn't know exactly which species these hominins belonged to—it would take many more months of effort and analysis before we published the scientific papers detailing this new species, *Homo naledi*—but we knew it was something special.

Sometimes, after an especially exciting day, we would go down the road to Bushwhackers and celebrate with a few beers. Everyone would be talking and laughing, with different conversations splitting as we discussed how this was going to change science, paleoanthropology, and how we think about human origins. Every now and then there would be

a quiet lull, as people looked out the windows of the bar at the hill off in the distance, and reflected on how Rising Star was changing *us*. There were tears, and smiles, and lots and lots of happy scientists.



*The "Underground Astronauts" of the Rising Star Expedition. Hannah Morris is at the far right.
(photo by Dave Ingold)*

Just as incredible as what we were finding was *how* we were doing it. At night, the Command Center

would turn into a field classroom, where various members of the team would Skype into real classrooms around the world to answer questions. We have seen so many people, from first graders to professors, get excited and engaged with science through this project, and that has been one of the most amazing aspects of Rising Star. Students from around the world can now download 3-D morphs of fossil elements of *Homo naledi* and print their own fossils. We believe that encouraging participation in the process of science, which includes providing access to fossil material and data, can only advance paleoanthropology.

I am truly honored and grateful to be part of such an incredible team. From the volunteers to the senior scientists, we would not have been able to make this discovery without all of the people involved. And now comes the really fun part—*Homo naledi* has a *lot* more to tell us about hominin evolution and what it means to be human.

- Hannah Morris
University of Georgia

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