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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Obituary: Anne Reichert (10 June 1935 - 8 May 2022)

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Shortly before her 87th birthday Anne Reichert, well known for her archaeological reconstructions throughout Europe, died at her home in Southern Germany.

> "The proof of the pudding is in the

Since childhood, she cultivated a great interest in experimenting with ceramics and textile techniques. In an interview for the journal *Palaeos* (Issue 2, 2007) she said: "in

eating.

the times of need during the Second World War, I wove shoes from straw" ("*...bereits in den Notzeiten des zweiten Weltkrieges habe ich Schuhe aus Stroh geflochten*"). The traumatic events of the war, as well as her escape from her home in Pommern occupied Anne throughout her life. All those who knew her privately were amazed again and again by her courage and stamina, which she must have developed during these terrible years. Due to her husband's work she lived with her family for a few years in Afghanistan (1968-1972). During these years, she also travelled to Pakistan, India, Persia, Turkey and China.

Back in Germany, Anne worked for a schoolbook publisher and as an editor for scientific books and journals. From the 1980s onwards she started her career as a freelance and self-taught experimental archaeologist.

She concentrated on the following issues:

- Experimental research in textile materials from the Stone Age, comprising extraction, processing, manufacturing techniques and the reconstruction of textile objects based on archaeological finds (hats, sandals, bags, nets, baskets, sieves, bark vessels etc.)
- Experimental research and reconstruction of Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age ceramics, pit fire, clay oven and birch tar production

Annes` ability for communicating her passion led to countless invitations to workshops and activities in open-air museums, such as the "Land of Legends" in Lejre, Denmark, where she passed on her knowledge in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Through the course "Conservation and restoration of archaeological, ethnological and crafted objects" ("*Konservierung und Restaurierung von archäologischen, ethnologischen und kunsthandwerklichen Objekten*") that she performed at the *Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste* in Stuttgart, Anne inspired students with her knowledge and let them try twisting lime bast themselves.

At the Institute for Prehistoric Archaeology at the Free University of Berlin she participated in the programme for the "Long Night of Science" ("*Lange Nacht der Wissenschaft*") at which hundreds of participants regularly participated. In addition, she presented lectures about prehistoric techniques at different universities (Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Cologne, Leiden, Vienna), carried out projects and events at museums and taught advanced training courses in schools.

Unlike other experimental archaeologists, it was very important for Anne to document and publish her results. Anne Reichert's rich bibliography is a testament to her active life within the framework of lived history. Only a few fellow promoters of experimental archaeology can claim to have passed on their knowledge so generously.

It was unthinkable for Anne to impart knowledge without putting it into practice. While archaeological research is often rather reserved about textile production techniques, Anne focussed on her own practical experience, which was not always appreciated. The tireless struggle for an understanding of how Stone Age people produced their textiles occupied her throughout life. A good example is her reconstruction of a twisted braid in the shape of a compressed cone point from the Neolithic wetland settlement of Seekirch-Achwiesen in Southern Germany. For many months, she discussed with Annemarie Feldkeller, the details of the techniques, tried out and rejected them until the reconstruction resembled the original.

With her participation in the research project THEFBO, which dealt with Neolithic textile production research, she enriched the project.

A selection of her most important projects includes:

- Reconstruction of various parts of the equipment of the Neolithic iceman Ötzi
- Reconstructions of wickerwork and baskets from the Neolithic pile dwellings of Lake Constance and Lake Federsee.
- Reconstruction and scientific consultation for the German TV channel SWR "Stone Age – The Experiment" (*Steinzeit – Das Experiment*) and the project "Pfahlbauer von Pfyn – Steinzeit Live!"
- Her own exhibition “Bast, Binsen, Brennnessel – textile materials from the Stone Age” (more information here)

Her legendary exhibition shows the processing of textile raw materials and presents reconstructions based on archaeological finds. The exhibition travelled through half of Europe and could be seen beyond German-speaking borders: the ArcheoParc Schnals in South Tyrol showed it under the title "*Raffie, ortiche e giuncacee – Materiale tessile dell'età della pietra*" and the Préhistosite de Ramioul, Flémalle in Belgium called it "*Liber, jonc et ortie – Fibres textiles de l'âge de la pierre / Bast, Biezen, Brandnetels – Textielmaterialen uit de steentijd*". The exhibition and the events around it were often a magnet for visitors which resulted in increased visitor numbers, for example in the Federseemuseum Bad Buchau and the Heuneburg Museum, both located in Southern Germany.

Anne Reichert was a passionate experimental archaeologist who could transfer her passion to her listeners – whether they were her students, pupils, laymen or researchers. Many of her articles in newspapers and her interviews illustrate her capacity to absorb others in crafts and the use of plant fibres in archaeology:

"You can grasp her fascination when Anne Reichert talks about the early Stone Age. The woman from Ettlingen-Bruchhausen is an experimental archaeologist with her whole body and soul". ("*Die Faszination ist Anne Reichert deutlich anzumerken, wenn sie über die*

Jungsteinzeit spricht. Die Frau aus Ettlingen-Bruchhausen ist nämlich experimentelle Archäologin mit Leib und Seele". (Badische Originale, Volker Knopf, 2014, Der Kleine Buch Verlag, Karlsruhe).

She was particularly concerned with passing on her respect for the prehistoric people whose extraordinary skills and intelligence she repeatedly encountered through her intensive study of artefacts and their production:

"The still widespread opinion of the "stupid savage" can turn into respect for the achievements and inventions made by our ancestors." ("*Die noch vielfach verbreitete Meinung vom "dummen Wilden" kann umschlagen in Achtung vor den Leistungen und Erfindungen, die unsere Vorfahren gemacht haben*" (Interview Palaeos, Heft 2, 2007).);

"That was high-tech of the Stone Age". Commentary in relation to the three-layer shoes of the ice mummy Ötzi (*"Das war High-Tech der Steinzeit". Kommentar in Bezug auf die dreilagigen Schuhe der Eismumie Ötzi* (von Anne Reichert mehrmals rekonstruiert u.a. für die Alpenüberquerung im Rahmen des SWR-Fernsehprojekts "Steinzeit – Das Experiment" 2013. Interview mit Die Rheinpfalz 16.05.2018)

With great conviction, she was committed to giving experimental archaeology the importance it deserves within the framework of scientific research and the acquisition of knowledge:

"Through experiment we can contribute to making history comprehensible" ("W*ir können durch das Experiment dazu beitragen, Geschichte begreifbar zu machen*" (Interview Badisches Tagblatt, 2018))

"Although our work is often successfully verified afterwards by scientific research, it is unfortunately still smiled at in some places." ("*Obwohl unsere Arbeit oft nachträglich durch wissenschaftliche Forschungen erfolgreich überprüft wird, wird sie leider mancherorts noch belächelt*". (Interview in Palaeos, Heft 2, 2007))

She replied: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." When asked “What advice do you have for young archaeologists and craftspeople who also want to get involved in experimental archaeology?" (*"Probieren geht über studieren*" (auf die Frage: Was rätst du jungen Archäologen/-innen und Handwerker/-innen, wenn sie sich ebenfalls mit der Experimentellen Archäologie beschäftigen wollen? Interview Anzeiger EAS 2020)

Anne was an EXAR (Europäische Vereinigung zur Förderung der Experimentellen Archäologie) and an AEAS (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für experimentelle Archäologie der Schweiz) member. The extensive collection of her own textile reconstructions, study protocols and materials was handed over to the Stone Age Village Pestenacker (UNESCO World Heritage Site), administered by the Landsberg am Lech district. The collection will be inventoried,

maintained, and presented in an exhibition in the Stone Age Village. Large parts of Anne Reichert's collection of her ceramic reconstructions were handed over to the Raußmühle in Eppingen (European cultural heritage) and will there be on display in the exhibition.

We will keep Anne Reichert in our best memories.

PHOTO BY ANA BARILLA

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