



Exhibiting the Bronze Age: a European Perspective

Musée d'Archéologie nationale – Domaine de Saint-Germain-en-Laye
March 6th 2026

Programme

Morning

From 9:00 am: Welcome

9:30–9:45 am: Introduction by Rose-Marie Mousseaux, Director of the MAN & Claude Mordant, President of Aprab: *Why and how should the Bronze Age be exhibited in Europe?*

9:45-10:20 am: Regine Maraszek (Halle Museum)
Exhibition concepts based on the Nebra Sky Disc – promoting awareness of Europe's Bronze Age

10:20-10:55 am: Roberto Rich (Barcelona University), Juan Antonio López Padilla, Angel Rocamora (Alicante Museum)
Dinastías: Rethinking Bronze Age Society through Science and Museography.

10:55 – 11:15 am: Coffee Break

11:15-11:50 am: Neil Wilkin (British Museum), Jennifer Wexler (English Heritage), Duncan Garrow (University of Reading), & Chris Griffiths (Manchester Museum)
Enchantment and engagement: The world of Stonehenge and its afterlives

11:50-12:25 am: Selina Stokar (Musée historique de Berne)
Reimagining the Bronze Age for today's audiences.

12:25–1 pm: Luc Amkreutz (National Museum of Antiquities Netherlands)
Between Sun and Water. Curating the Bronze Age exhibition 'Fires of Change' at the National Museum of Antiquities

1-2 pm: lunch





Programme

Friday March 6th Afternoon

2:10 – 2:30 pm: Rolande Simon-Millot (MAN), Rebecca Peake (Inrap), Cyril Marcigny (Inrap), Stefan Wirth (Burgundy University)
The Masters of Fire (Musée d'Archéologie nationale)

2:30 – 2.40 pm: Claude Mordant (APRAB)
The Bronze Age in 2025: a brief introduction

2:40 – 3 pm: Jean Demerliac (Inrap)
Inrap's 2025 Bronze Age scientific and cultural season: an overview

3 – 3:20 pm: Sylvie Marot (Esmod)
Dressing in the Bronze Age: Insights from Experience

3:20 – 3:40 pm: Audrey Traon Maingaud (Musée de Nemours), Emmanuelle Audry-Brunet (Musée Anne-de-Beaujeu)
Luxury Objects, instruments of Power (Nemours and Moulins exhibitions)

3:40 - 4 pm: Françoise Toulemonde & Rolande Simon-Millot (MAN)
Masters of Fire... and Earth: Bronze Age Fields in the Domaine national du Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye

4 – 4:20 pm: Tea Break

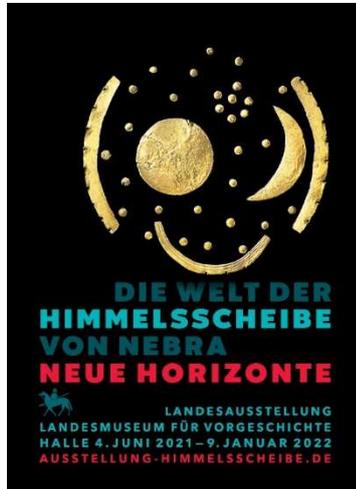
4:20 – 4:40 pm: Estelle Comte & Dorothee Royot (Ecomusée de la Bresse)
Exhibiting the Bronze Age in a rural Ethnology Museum

4 :40 – 5 pm: Sylvie Jurietti (Musée préhistoire des Gorges du Verdun), Rolande Simon-Millot (MAN) & Gwenaëlle Colas (Musée Denon)
The exhibitions « Bronze Age hoards in France » (museums of Lons, Metz, Chalon-sur-Saône)

5 -6 pm: Discussion

Rolande Simon-Millot, Rebecca Peake, Cyril Marcigny, Stefan Wirth

ARRAB



Dr. Regine Maraszek

Curator at the State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt

Concepts and project management for the exhibitions on the Sky Disc since 2009 head of special exhibitions

State Museum of Prehistory Halle

Exhibition concepts based on the Nebra Sky Disc – promoting awareness of Europe's Bronze Age

The Nebra Sky Disc is one of the most popular archaeological finds of the past century in Europe. This is due in part to its cultural and historical significance, and in part to excellent public relations work. In addition to traditional press presentations, this included a whole series of exhibitions in various formats.

The discovery of the Sky Disc offered a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the Bronze Age as an epoch throughout the world and to win over an enormous number of people as friends and supporters of archaeology. Today more than 2 million people have seen the original find in an exhibition.

The strategy, planning and conception of the exhibitions at the State Museum of Prehistory in Halle are the focus of the lecture. The various forms of exhibitions, contents and formats are presented in context. The results of the projects are presented in an overview of the exhibition, accompanying media and products.

2002 'The Universe is a Disc' (first presentation)

2004 'The Forged Sky. The Wide World in the Heart of Europe' 2004 (state exhibition, further venues: Copenhagen, Basel, Mannheim, Vienna)

2007 'Arche Nebra' (visitor centre)

2007 'A Heaven on Earth' (travelling exhibition)

2008 'Sky Paths' 2008 (landscape route)

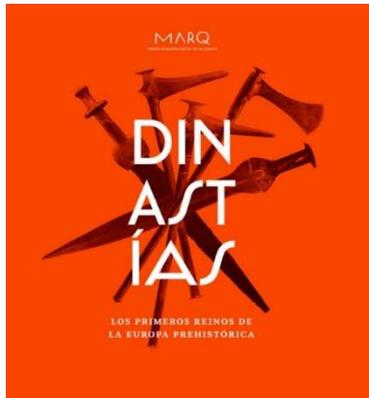
2008 'Bronze Rush' (permanent exhibition in Halle)

2020 'New Horizons. The World of the Nebra Sky Disc'

2022 'Sky Paths 51°17' 2', 11°31'12'E' 2022.

(eMuseum)

ARRAB



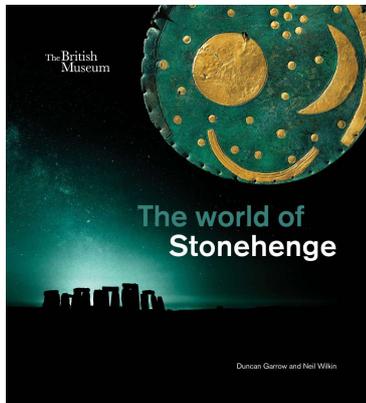
Exhibition « Dinastías Los Primeros reinos de la Europa prehistorica, Museo arqueológico de Alicante (March–October 2024)

Roberto Rich
Barcelona University
Juan Antonio López Padilla & Angel Rocamora
Alicante Museum

Dinastías: Rethinking Bronze Age Society through Science and Museography.

In 2024, the Museo Arqueológico de Alicante (MARQ) organised an international exhibition on the beginnings of the Bronze Age, whose main objective was to present the causes and processes that shaped one of the most decisive periods in European history. The exhibition’s museographic approach sought to bring the public closer to the three most dynamic societies of continental Europe between 2200 and 1550 BCE: El Argar in Southern Iberia, Únětice in Central Europe and Otomani-Füzesabony in the Carpathian Basin and encouraged reflection on social and political issues that remain relevant today, but first took shape during this period: social inequality, the emergence of political borders and armies, active competition for the control of territories and resources, and the regulation of long-distance exchange networks. Ultimately, Dynasties aimed to foster an understanding of the origins and functioning of what may be considered the earliest state-level societies in the prehistory of continental Europe. Dynasties also offered an updated perspective on the Bronze Age in light of the intense interdisciplinary research carried out in recent years. The exhibition narrative highlighted, among other aspects, the historical implications of ancient DNA studies on human remains, as well as studies of archaeological materials. Finally, Dynasties required equally innovative exhibition resources to contextualise spectacular archaeological artefacts within the material and symbolic conditions that likely gave rise to concepts now taken for granted, such as “dynasty,” “army,” “slave,” “warrior,” or “state.” The exhibition invites visitors to reflect on the origins of social relationships that we may too readily assume to be inherent to human nature.

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Exhibition « The World of Stonehenge », British Museum (2022)

Neil Wilkin

British Museum

Jennifer Wexler

English Heritage

Duncan Garrow

University of Reading

Chris Griffiths

Manchester Museum

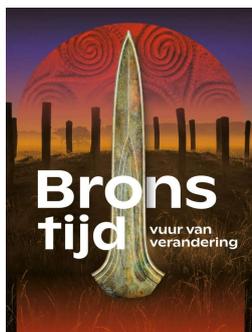
Enchantment and engagement: The world of Stonehenge and its afterlives

The world of Stonehenge exhibition was held at the British Museum in 2022. It brought together objects from across north-west Europe to place the globally famous monument of Stonehenge in a more holistic and object-enriched context. In this paper we will explore British audience's perceptions of the Bronze Age and how the decision to forefront Stonehenge proved to be both a strength and potential weakness (or, rather, challenge) of our curatorial and narrative approaches. We will stress the importance of an approach to design and engagement with objects that creates a sense of enchantment and wonder.

We will also report the findings of our research project designed to forefront the concept of 'alternative icons' that ran concurrently with the exhibition. The project sought to champion objects that do not conform to the stereotype of prehistoric objects in terms of their material or aesthetic properties or what they claim to convey about society. It offered new ways of conveying, in thoughtful ways, what is important (and known) about deep history to wide audiences.

Finally, we will present new research undertaken to give *The world of Stonehenge* a digital afterlife by creating a digital version of the exhibition, and the opportunities and challenges of translating experiential exhibitions into the digital sphere.

ARRAB



Exhibition « Fires of Change »,
Rijksmuseum van Oudheden Leiden
(2024–2025)

Luc Amkreutz
National
Museum of
Antiquities
Netherlands

Between Sun and Water. Curating the Bronze Age exhibition 'Fires of Change' at the National Museum of Antiquities

The Bronze Age is one of the most formative periods in European history. The introduction of a new metal, bronze, led to an unsurpassed level of connectedness and intensive societal change. It is a period seemingly marked by aspects of modernity, such as a circular economy, technological innovation, entangled networks, primitive money, violence, a managed landscape and elites that some associate even with modern European values and identity. It is also a period that remains remote, that did not leave any written documents and is characterised by seemingly illogical rituals such as the deposition of valuables. At the same time it is a period that from a material perspective boasts and enormous 'object power' with technologically and symbolically complex artefacts that continue to impress today.

Taking on and presenting such an entire period of prehistory in one exhibition is a daunting task. In 2024-2025 the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden set out to do so with the exhibition 'Bronze Age. Fires of Change' which focused on the Bronze Age in Northwestern Europe with an emphasis on the Low Countries and which was the first large scale exhibition for this period in the Netherlands. The exhibition was able to bring together the hallmark finds for this period from the Bronze Age, but specifically also cast a wide net in drawing international loans to Leiden, such as the Schifferstadt gold hat, the Mold Gold cape or the massive Guñes torques. By being able to draw on both the local and the international a true picture of connectedness could be painted. Simultaneously, by including both the shiny celebrated hallmark finds of precious metal as well as the well-preserved everyday organic artefacts and remains, a veritable juxtaposition could be created of seeming opposites that were in fact part of one world. While presenting a period like this offers many tactile elements and objects to work with, the true challenge lies in presenting an encompassing story that is historically informative, visually attractive and touches upon the essence of what makes this such an instrumental period in time. For this a wide net was cast both chronologically and geographically, starting in the Neolithic with a strong focus on the Corded Ware and Bell Beaker communities, and ending in the Early Iron Age with the Hallstatt culture, meanwhile drawing in the related Bronze Age stories from Atlantic and Central Europe north of the Alps. In this presentation the content and story line of the exhibition and choices made will be discussed from a curatorial perspective. Emphasis will be placed on how the different chronological and thematic 'chapters' in the exhibition highlight selected aspects of this period such as migration, the economic and ritual landscape, networks, elites and societal change and how, taken together, the image of an interlinked networked society is created. This eventually at the end makes us reflect on whether this is truly an evident stepping stone and key-period in the development of Europe or rather, and perhaps more interestingly, holds up a mirror that has us question current society from a local and global perspective.

APRAB



Exhibition The Masters of Fire. The Bronze Age in France (2300–800 BCE)
Musée d'Archéologie nationale
June 2025-June 2026

Rolande Simon-Millot

Musée d'Archéologie nationale

Rebecca Peake

Inrap

Cyril Marcigny

Inrap

Stefan Wirth

Université Bourgogne-Europe

Forging a Vision of the Bronze Age: Curating «The Masters of Fire»

Les Maîtres du feu. The Bronze Age in France (2300–800 BCE) stands at the heart of the Bronze Age season, a major national initiative aimed at fundamentally reshaping public perception of this period. The exhibition was developed by the Musée d'Archéologie nationale in close partnership with Inrap and APRAB.

Conceived as a complement to the exhibitions presented simultaneously in Nemours, Pierre-de-Bresse, Moulins, Carnac and Quinson (and to those forthcoming in Chambéry, Nantes and Bibracte), it occupies a distinctive position within this collective effort: that of a national overview bringing together discoveries arising from both preventive archaeology and programmed research, as well as a substantial body of older and often fortuitous, finds that have long shaped our understanding of the period. The aim was not only to present the Bronze Age, but to enhance it and make its defining features visible to the public through the scientific advances of the past twenty years.

Rather than following a chronological narrative, we adopted an approach with four themes: production, trade and exchange, imagining the world and inhabiting the world. This framework enabled us to explain the important role of metalworking, the true guiding thread of the exhibition, while revealing the diversity of the societies engaged in it. At the core of the exhibition lies the spectacular: gold torcs, the Avanton cone, major hoards, the Saint-Bélec slab, objects whose brilliance and ostentatious power illustrate the exceptional prestige of the Bronze Age. Yet we also chose to include a smaller, but essential, selection of more modest objects, tools, pottery and everyday ornaments that represent the texture of daily life. Together, these assemblages illuminate both the dazzling display culture of the period and the social worlds within which such masterpieces were conceived, in an age where technical innovation, expanding trade networks, symbolic systems and shifting landscapes were tightly interwoven.

This presentation will outline the principles that guided the conception of *Les Maîtres du feu*, as well as the collective ambition underpinning the Year of the Bronze Age: to convey a foundational period in ways that are intelligible, meaningful and vivid for all audiences.

APRAB



The Bronze Age in France 2025: a brief introduction

At the close of the Metz conference in June 2022, a small group of APRAB delegates expressed the ambition of promoting a Year of the Bronze Age in France. They agreed to revisit the proposal in autumn 2022 to assess its feasibility and to define a programme. The initiative envisaged organising a series of exhibitions, including one of national scope, alongside the publication of catalogues and works aimed at a broader readership. It also included the preparation of a comprehensive overview of the Bronze Age in France and the organisation of a national conference.

APRAB established a partnership with the Musée d'Archéologie nationale (MAN) and the Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives (Inrap), immediately gaining the support of colleagues specialists of the Bronze Age. There was no time to lose: 2025 would be the Year of the Bronze Age in France. Work began on the national exhibition at the MAN and on the outline of the proposed overview of the Bronze Age, published in 2025 by Inrap and Presses du CNRS in the Recherches archéologiques series.

The programme ultimately proved highly successful:

Exhibitions: at the Musée d'Archéologie nationale, *Les Maîtres du Feu*; regional exhibitions at Moulins (*L'Odyssée du Bronze*), Nemours (*Pouvoir et métal*), Pierre-de-Bresse (*Les méandres du passé*), Quinson (*Échos du Bronze*) and Carnac (*Peuple de la mer ? Le Campaniforme en Bretagne et au-delà*). Each exhibition published catalogues and special issues of les *Dossiers de l'Archéologie* and *Archéologia*.

Publication: *L'âge du Bronze en France*, in two volumes, a collective work produced in partnership with Inrap.

Conference: *Dessine-moi le passé: Representations of Societies from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age*, held in Lille (8–10 October 2025) as part of the *Rencontres Nord-Sud de Préhistoire récente (RNS5)*, in partnership with the *Rencontres méridionales de Préhistoire récente* and Internéo.

Claude Mordant
President of APRAB

ARRAB



Inrap's Bronze Season
2025

Jean Demerliac
Editor, Cultural
Development and
Communications
Department, Inrap

Inrap's 2025 "Bronze Age" scientific and cultural season: an overview

Since 2017, the National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (Inrap) has dedicated each year's scientific and cultural season to exploring a major period or theme. The 2025 season, focussed on the Bronze Age, provided the opportunity for the institute, in partnership with numerous cultural and scientific institutions, to offer a varied program of events (exhibitions, conferences, meetings, screenings, book presentations, etc.) and to share the latest research findings on this period.

This presentation aims to take stock of the institute's rich program around this "Bronze Age" season. How can we measure the impact of these actions on the public? Insight can be gained by looking at visitor numbers at partner cultural events, as well as by analysing online audiences on the [inrap.fr](https://www.inrap.fr) website and the institute's social media accounts.

APRAB



Dressing in the Bronze Age: Insights from Experience

During the exhibition “Masters of Fire,” the Musée d’Archéologie Nationale partnered with ESMOD in a creative residency bringing together fashion design, historical research and cultural transmission. Guided by the expertise of archaeologists from Inrap and APRAB, twelve students from ESMOD France campuses (Paris, Lyon, Rennes, Bordeaux, and Roubaix), joined by Monica Alana Mauri, winner of the 2024 Young Designer Peru competition, explored the craft techniques of the Bronze Age. Motifs, materials, methods and narratives drawn from the exhibition informed and enriched their creative process. From these experiments emerged eight original ensembles, along with adornments for children, men, and women, inspired by objects discovered in burials and hoards. These creations were presented in the exhibition during the Science Festival.

Sylvie Marot

Director of Art Culture
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APRAB



Bronze Age field, Domaine du Château de Saint Germain-en-Laye, Spring 2025

Françoise Toulemonde
Archaeobotanist
Rolande Simon-Millot
Musée d'Archéologie Nationale

Masters of Fire... and Earth: Bronze Age Fields in the Domaine national du Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye

From June 2025 to June 2026, the Musée d'Archéologie nationale is presenting a major exhibition dedicated to the Bronze Age in France, entitled "The Masters of Fire", which explores the technological and social innovations of a decisive period in European history. Produced in partnership with Inrap and Aprab, this exhibition is held at the heart of the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the museum's location. For the first time in its history, the Musée d'Archéologie nationale sought to extend the visitor experience beyond its galleries and proposed the creation of a Bronze Age "garden" within the Domaine national, to offer the public a direct encounter with the plants cultivated more than three millennia ago. Showing the living world, the diversity of crops and ancient agricultural practices complemented the narrative conveyed by the exhibition inside the château. However, this undertaking faced the constraints of a large and closely monitored French formal garden. The domaine's gardeners cautiously welcomed our "wild" plants and we had to find arrangements that respected this historical setting.

Why a Bronze Age Garden?

As distant and immutable as they may seem today, Neolithic and Protohistoric agricultures were never fixed. Archaeobotany has revealed the scope of cultivated species, their local adaptation and how trade and innovation influenced agricultural practices.

During the Bronze Age, the strengthening of European networks led to the introduction of new crops, such as spelt, millets, bitter vetch and gold-of-pleasure, as well as new expertise. This wave of innovations profoundly transformed farming systems and modified diets, to the point that some researchers speak of a "third food revolution". Bronze Age agriculture is indeed based on the complementarity of productions, the preservation of soil fertility, and the pursuit of security rather than unpredictable surpluses. Settlement sites contain few granaries or silo-pits, unlike what is observed during the Iron Age. These technical and environmental choices resonate with our contemporary questions about the sustainability and limits of intensive agriculture.



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A Project Led in Partnership Over Two Years

The project was carried out with the Agro-Campus of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and benefited from donations of ancient cereal varieties from farmers of the Semences Paysannes network (J.-F. Berthelot, J.-Y. Marc) and the Arvalis conservatory (A. Laurent).

Two seasons were necessary: 2024, the test year, allowed us to experiment on a reduced scale with sowing and to tame the land so that in 2025, we could develop our full-scale cultures, in parallel with the exhibition.

Two distinct areas were created. The 240 m² educational "garden", located slightly back from the main grounds near the chateau, presents all the domestic plants of the Bronze Age. It is organised into small plots grouped in an enclosure and enclosed by a hedge of wild fruit trees. It highlights the diversity of crops identified during excavation through seed and pollen analyses.

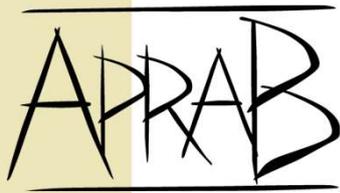
The large cereal circle is spread over 800 m² on the terrace, one of the most frequented spots on the Domaine. Sown with heritage cereals, its radiating shape is inspired by the Bronze Age wheel-shaped pendants that symbolise the sun. Carefully designed pathways allow for total immersion: visitors stroll among the ears of wheat, enveloped in their copper and golden hues. They touch, smell, and freely absorb this pastoral atmosphere.

Both installations, that met with great success, were freely accessible with guided tours during major events (Rendez-vous aux jardins, Journées européennes de l'archéologie). The public was struck by the beauty of these ancient varieties and the presence of crops that have now disappeared.

A Scientific and Educational Tool

Beyond their function as a means of public outreach, these gardens have served for numerous educational and research activities: presentation of textile and dyeing plants at the ESMOD school, school visits, experimental harvests by archaeobotanists from the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, doctoral work on the use-wear analysis of flax processing tools, experimental banquet carried out by the Bouillon Brume culinary collective, etc.

These gardens have raised multiple questions about daily life, techniques and agricultural landscapes of the Bronze Age. They have contributed to making societies now largely forgotten more relatable, more vivid and more accessible, reminding us that behind the weapons, adornments, and prestigious objects of this period, there were also fields, practices, cultivated biodiversity, and a genuine agricultural mindset.



Estelle COMTE,
Director of the Écomusée
de la Bresse

Dorothee ROYOT,
Head of the Public Services
Department at the
Écomusée de la Bresse



Exhibition *Les Méandres du passé: Quand la Bresse raconte l'âge du Bronze*, Écomusée de la Bresse, June 2025-July 2026

Exhibiting the Bronze Age in a Rural Ethnology Museum

The exhibition *Les Méandres du passé: Quand la Bresse raconte l'âge du Bronze*, organised at the Écomusée de la Bresse as part of the national initiative Bronze 150, offers a rare opportunity to present prehistoric material within an ethnological museum context. As an institution primarily devoted to the 20th century rural history and traditional crafts of the Bresse, the Écomusée faced a significant challenge: how to narrate the story of ancient human societies while remaining faithful to its mission and its strong territorial anchorage. Excavations at Pierre-de-Bresse brought to light an exceptional assemblage of Bronze Age artefacts, attracting both national and European attention. This discovery enabled the Écomusée de la Bresse to curate an exhibition of unprecedented scale, which was subsequently awarded the distinction “Exhibition of National Interest” by the French Ministry of Culture. The project, however, also presented a number of challenges. The museum’s regular visitors were not necessarily accustomed to temporary exhibitions, nor to archaeology more broadly. The exhibition therefore required the development of enhanced pedagogical strategies to explain archaeological practice, its methods and its broader relevance. Moreover, the Bronze Age remains a relatively unfamiliar period for many, necessitating the construction of a shared interpretative framework. At the same time, the museum sought to ensure coherence with its institutional identity by establishing connections between the prehistoric finds and its permanent collections of 19th- and early 20th century rural societies in the Bresse region. The exhibition was structured around a central theme: the relationship between human societies and their environment, articulated through the lens of the Anthropocene. It demonstrated that this relationship, which had remained comparatively stable for millennia, was profoundly transformed only in recent history with the widespread exploitation of fossil fuels and the advent of industrialisation. The practices and skills observed within the Bronze Age community of Pierre-de-Bresse resonate strongly with those of 19th century rural Bresse societies, revealing technical and social continuities that serve to underscore the scale of recent changes in contemporary ways of life. Within the temporary exhibition, particular emphasis was placed on the close interdependence between the Bronze Age community of Pierre-de-Bresse and its environment. Complementary displays in the museum’s permanent galleries, drawing on comparative archaeology, illustrate the persistence of this relationship in Bresse until the early 20th century. In order to render these concepts accessible, the temporary exhibition also functioned as a platform for an extensive cultural programme aimed at diverse audiences. Theatrical tours, “scientific aperitifs,” family workshops, an archaeology village, and a range of educational activities provided engaging interpretative tools through which visitors could approach potentially unfamiliar concepts. By combining scientific rigour with an ethnological perspective, the exhibition succeeds in immersing the public in a little-known historical period, fostering dialogue between the distant past and contemporary concerns, and foregrounding the long-standing relationship between human communities and their territory, an enduring core mission of the Écomusée de la Bresse.

APPRAH



Cascading Bric-à-Brac

In 2017, the museum of Lons-le-Saunier (Jura) presented the exhibition *Bric-à-brac pour les dieux?*, focusing on Bronze Age metal hoards in Bourgogne–Franche-Comté. The aim was to showcase major collections in the light of new interpretative approaches. The exhibition opened with an introduction to the Bronze Age, followed by a presentation of the hoarding phenomenon in all its diversity. A defining feature of the scenography was the use of life-sized drawings of human figures. This same museographical approach was also used for the exhibition *Offrandes pour les dieux ?*, presented in 2019 at the Musée de la Cour d'Or, which placed greater emphasis on hoards from the Saar–Lorraine region. It was taken up again at the Musée Denon in 2022 for *Des épées pour la Saône ?* that focused on hoards deposited in wet contexts, particularly in rivers. In France, these exhibitions marked the beginning of a broader wave of public outreach about the Bronze Age, enabling this still relatively little-known period to gain increased visibility.

Sylvie Jurietti

Director of the Museum of Prehistory of the Gorges du Verdon, Quinson (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence)

Gwenaëlle Colas

Head of the Archaeological Collections, Musée Denon

Rolande Simon-Millot

Curator of the Neolithic and Bronze Age Collections, Musée d'Archéologie nationale