



Jana Esther Fries, Doris Gutzmiedl-Schümann,  
Jo Zalea Matias, Ulrike Rambuscheck (Eds.)

# Images of the Past

Gender and its Representations

# Frauen – Forschung – Archäologie

*herausgegeben von  
FemArcEdition*

*Band 12*

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Gender and its Representations



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# **Frauen – Forschung – Archäologie**

## Vorwort der FemArcEdition

„Frauen – Forschung – Archäologie“ – unter diesem Titel fand 1994 eine Tagung des Netzwerks archäologisch arbeitender Frauen statt. Dieses Motto wurde in der Folgezeit zum Titel der Reihe, in dem das Netzwerk seine weiteren Tagungsdokumentationen veröffentlicht. Seit ihrer Gründung im Jahr 2000 nimmt die FemArcEdition diese Aufgabe wahr.

Wir haben es uns zum Ziel gesetzt, feministische Archäologie in der Öffentlichkeit bekannter zu machen. Deshalb wurde die Reihe „Frauen – Forschung – Archäologie“ für Arbeiten geöffnet, die archäologische Fragestellungen mit Konzepten aus den Gender Studies oder aus dem feministischen Bereich bearbeiten. Die Reihe bietet Forscherinnen und Forschern Publikationsmöglichkeiten für:

- Abschluss- und Forschungsarbeiten,
- Tagungsdokumentationen und Sammelbände,
- Beiträge, entstanden innerhalb und außerhalb des Netzwerks.

Interessierte können sich an jede der Herausgeberinnen wenden.

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## Preface/Vorwort

This volume unites papers that were held at two different conferences, but to similar topics. First, the gender study group (AG Geschlechterforschung) contributed a session on the topic “Gender in Museums” to the symposium of the Nordwestdeutscher Verband für Altertumskunde (Northwest German Association for Antiquarian Studies) in September 2013 in Lübeck, Germany. Responsible for this session were Jana Esther Fries, Oldenburg, and Ulrike Rambuscheck, Hannover. The year after, in 2014, Jana Esther Fries, Oldenburg, Doris Gutsmiedl-Schümann, back then Bonn, now Berlin, and Jo Zalea Matias, then Durham, organized a session on “Images of the Past: Gender and its Representations” during the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Istanbul. This session also became the title of the book.

Many people have contributed to this volume. Our thanks go to André Peschke, Oldenburg, for proofreading and Michael Wesemann, Oldenburg, for language assistance and translation, to Mirjam Briel, Hannover, for language assistance and Julia K. Koch, Preetz, for specific information on yokes. We would like to thank our authors, who contributed to this volume, and the peer reviewers, whose help towards the final book cannot be estimated high enough. Special thanks go to the Women’s representative of the Department of History and Cultural Studies of Freie Universität Berlin, Franziska Lesák, and FemArc e. V. for financial support. Waxmann’s Executive Editor Beate Plugge has dealt competently with details of the layout and other matters relating to the printing process. Thank you all!

July, 2017

*Jana Esther Fries, Oldenburg*

*Doris Gutsmiedl-Schümann, Berlin*

*Jo Zalea Matias, Champaign*

*Ulrike Rambuscheck, Hannover*



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# **Introduction/Einleitung**

*Jana Esther Fries, Doris Gutsmiedl-Schümann, Jo Zalea Matias,  
Ulrike Rambuscheck*

Pictures are omnipresent and essential in archaeology. They are regularly used to inform the reader about the ancient past, especially about prehistory and material culture. This is done by museum curators, researchers, and reenactors as well as by graphic novelists, artists in the film industry, illustrators of children's books, etc. Academics may think they communicate with their peers mainly through spoken and written words, but images and visual representations are crucial to archaeology, from illustrations of statistics and drawings of ceramics to graphic reconstructions of houses and chaîns opératoires of flint knapping. Archaeological discourse is not possible without pictures.

Just like words, images express more than is intended or even initially perceived (Holicki 1993; Allinger 2007, 46–48; Moser 2012). Whenever an archaeologist, actor, video game developer or illustrator depicts a person of the past, especially of the ancient past, there is a chance that a lot more about this person is expressed than was intended – about their age, health, values, social standing, body concept, or gender (Gifford-Gonzalez 1993). Even more is said when several interacting humans are shown in a scene (Jud/Kaenel 2002). The pictures used and their unconsciously made assertions primarily tell about us ourselves, our working techniques and the way we think. They subtly transport our convictions and view of the world – especially with regard to gender issues. Seemingly objective images are thus rendered entirely subjective.

There have been several studies that demonstrate the extent to which visual media influence and reinforces perception of the past (James 1997; Moser 2014; Perry 2009; Perry/Marion 2010; Smiles/Moser 2004; Samida 2010, Westin 2014). Others have looked specifically at how such visual media portray gender, especially illustrations (Allinger 2007; Gifford-Gonzalez 1993; Moser 1993; Solometo/Moss 2013). However, there have been few attempts to reconcile gender, archaeology and visual media in a way that interrogates the extent of images' influence on gender and archaeology and vice versa (see Matias 2015).

Pictorial representations in archaeology were a topic for the German gender studies group during the 5<sup>th</sup> German Archaeology Congress in Frankfurt

(Oder) (Fries/Rambuscheck/Schulte-Dornberg 2007). However, the debate continues: within the past 12 years, the relationship between historians, archaeologists, and broader public has advanced. In times of an adventure-orientated and online-culture with its events, divertissements and virtual worlds, movies, museums, social media, computer games, books and other popular media<sup>1</sup> are dealing more and more with archaeological issues. There are some studies dealing with the dissemination of history in popular media, but the category “gender” rarely serves as an analytic tool (Paletschek/Reusch 2013, 20). In response to this, Jana Esther Fries, Doris Gutzmiedl-Schümann and Jo Zalea Matias organized the session “Images of the Past: Gender and its Representations” during the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in September 2014 in Istanbul, focusing on this category.<sup>2</sup> Previously, the session of the gender study group (AG Geschlechterforschung) organized by Jana Esther Fries and Ulrike Rambuscheck dealt with the topic “Gender in Museums” at the symposium of the Nordwestdeutscher Verband für Altertumskunde (Northwest German Association for Antiquarian Studies) in September 2013. Amongst others, they pursued the question of how gender roles are visualized (if at all) in archaeological exhibitions.<sup>3</sup> The volume at hand is a compilation of the lectures held at both events, though not all papers could be published here.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 Popular Media should be defined as media (not necessarily mass media) presenting knowledge in an easily comprehensible and attractive way for a broad public (Korte/Paletschek 2009, 13).
  - 2 Abstracts of the session “Images of the past: Gender and its representations” at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Archaeologists are accessible under <http://www.eaa2014istanbul.org/pdf/abstracts.pdf> [31.1.2017].
  - 3 The conference minutes on the session of the gender studies work group can be found under <http://www.femarc.de/ag-geschlechterforschung/76-sitzung-in-luebeck.html> [31.1.2017].
  - 4 The lecture “Kinder-, Frauen- und auch Männerarbeit im Bergwerk. Neue Lebensbilder zum Hallstätter Salzbergbau” given by Kerstin Kowarik in Lübeck, was published under the title Hans Reschreiter/Doris Pany-Kucera/Dominic Gröbner, Kinderarbeit in 100m Tiefe? Neue Lebensbilder zum prähistorischen Hallstätter Salzbergbau. In: Raimund Karl/Jutta Leskovar (eds.), Interdisziplinäre Eisenzeiten. Fallstudien, Methoden, Theorie. Tagungsbeiträge der 5. Linzer Gespräche zur Interpretativen Eisenzeitarchäologie (Linz 2013) 25–37. The lecture given by Jutta Leskovar and Kerstin Kowarik “Prähistorische Genderbilder: Rollenklyschees in Museen” in Lübeck was published as Kerstin Kowarik/Jutta Leskovar, Women without History? History without women? Studies on the representation

Within the present publication two main issues crystallized: pictorial representations of archaeology in academic and popular media, and pictures in museums.<sup>5</sup> Margreth Lünenborg and Tanja Maier, in their introduction into Gender Media Studies, explained the broad impact of gender representations in popular media: “Media deliver pictures and stories of being a man or a woman. [...] But they don’t give us references of the outside world, as they establish it themselves. Media do construct a symbolic order of gender by their semiotic character” (Lünenborg/Maier 2013, 26, own translation). Such pictures demonstrate – and at the same time – form our gender concepts. Representations of the past in popular media like movies or video games presumably have a much stronger impact than any information given to the public by archaeological experts. This wider influence is not only based on a comparatively greater number of movie-goers than museum visitors, but also on their greater vividness, exciting stories, and a stronger perceived connection to user’s own world (Korte/Paletschek 2009, 15).

Images of the past are very present around us, as well as images about archaeology and archaeologists. In the same way as images of past times create a “common knowledge” of “how it had been in those times”, images of archaeologists at work create a common knowledge of “what archaeologists do”. Usually only the exciting or exotic moments of archaeology are shown: archaeologists at excavations, or splendid finds.

Everyday work goes unseen, such as the specialist who identified the ceramics in an archaeological record and had worked on the finds from this place for month until he or she came to this conclusion. In TV or in magazines it seems all so easy; the long work in libraries and archives is usually not displayed. Does that de-value the work of archaeologists in the view of the public? And does that affect the way illustrators or film-makers create their images of the past? Archaeologists working at universities know the

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of prehistoric gender roles in Austrian exhibitions. *Les Nouvelles de l’Archéologie* 140, 2015, 51–55. URL: <http://nda.revues.org/3029>; DOI: 10.4000/nda.3029. The lecture “The Boudica Trope: Deconstructing the Legend” given by Jo Zalea Matias in Istanbul could unfortunately not be printed.

5 Three lectures given on the EAA conference in Istanbul on images of past cultures (“A Faceless Gender: The Corporeality in the Çatalhöyük West Mound” by Goce Naumov and Peter F. Biehl, “Antagonizing Images? Visual Representations of Gender in Archaic Greek Vase Painting” by Wawrzyniec Miścicki and “Gender Relations on the Images of Roman Banquets” by Marina Regis Cavicchioli) could unfortunately not be printed.

phenomenon, that first semester students are quite frustrated when they realize that studying archaeology does not mean going out on fieldtrips and excavations all the time, but contains on the contrary a lot of studying and learning through books and in libraries. So, do images about archaeology create a certain kind of next-generation archaeologist? Additionally movies and documentations portray archaeologist in different ways according to their gender (see Endlich 2007).

The influence of particular gender ideologies in prehistoric presentations becomes even clearer when analyzing older pictures made for a broader public. Chloé Belard, in the first article of the present volume (*The Representation of Gallic and Celtic Women. An Iconography Fixed in the Ungendered Approach to Archaeological and Historical Data*), shows how the civic gender concept of that time was projected on Celtic groups since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Caroline Trémeaud (*How to Make Prehistory Attractive: Women's Representation of the Bronze and Iron Age*) also looks at how archaeological publications might unconsciously portray past individuals in stereotypical ways despite the application of archaeological knowledge. Georg Koch ("It has always been like that ..." *How Televised Prehistory Explains what Is Natural*) discusses stereotypical binary gender representations in archaeological TV-documentaries in Germany and Great Britain, from the 1970s to the present. Rachael Sycamore addresses one of the most important popular medium yet nearly unknown in archaeology, analyzing representations of women and men in video games (*Is it all Warfare and Treasure Hunting? Gender Roles and Representations in Video Games*). Katja Fält examines non-fiction books for children and adolescents (*Armour Fetishism, Homosociality and Masculine Display – The Representations of Medieval Knights and Viking Men in Illustrated Non-fictional Books for Young Readers*), claims to give correct and factual information, but in many cases still fosters gendered stereotypes.

Roswitha Muttenthaler and Regina Wonisch (2010, 188) found that the impact of the differentiated discourses within women's and gender studies on museums and exhibitions is quite small. Others (Butler 1996; Grab 1991; Jones 1991; Moser 2010; Sørensen 1999) have also looked at the relationship between gender and museum exhibitions, though there is room for further exploration. The 2013 meeting of the gender study group used this as a starting point by focusing on: 1) making the representations of gender roles in museums a subject for discussion; 2) examining museum visitor's reception behaviour; and 3) the occupational careers of women and men working in museums. The papers submitted made it quite clear, that very few studies exist on the

last two aspects and only one of them focuses on all three (Claudia Merthen “Archäologie und Geschlecht” im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg – Eine Bestandsaufnahme”).

Staging an exhibition with objects, images, showcases, labels, texts, illumination and interior design can present viewers with gendered stereotypes (Muttenthaler/Wonisch 2002, 97). Although the aim of exhibitions is to present scientific results they still have to rely on presumptions, deductions, and even subjective issues (Muttenthaler/Wonisch 2006, 250) that are not true representations of the past even though they are presented as such (Sørensen 1999, 137). For example, in many German prehistory museums you will find drawings or models of Linear Pottery Culture houses. In most cases these are shown during construction in order to demonstrate details of the architecture and building techniques. In these depictions several humans can be seen in or near the house. Many of them are shown working on the building; others carry out different tasks of daily labour, like ploughing, cooking, herding animals, weaving, etc. In nearly all of those models, two genders can be distinguished, there are usually more men than women, very few children, and a clear division of labour is noticeable. Whilst these images are presented in order to inform the public about a type of building (and the Neolithic revolution), the visitors may unconsciously absorb the stereotypes presented. In most cases this latter part of the information is neither intended, nor given consciously. For this reason it is not based on archaeological results but on what the illustrators and designers of these models think about prehistoric humans and their gender roles.

So while these images are presented in order to inform the public about a type of building, often in the context of the beginning of a sedentary way of living, and the beginning of farming and animal husbandry in the Neolithic, the visitors may and in many cases will learn at least as much about a gender topic. In most cases this latter part of the information is neither intended, nor given consciously. For this reason, it is not based on archaeological results but on what the illustrators and designers of these models think about prehistoric humans and their genders.

This is especially crucial when those images are part of school textbooks, especially history textbooks. Most people take for granted what they had learned in school – so it is very important that not only the texts but especially the images in school textbooks are carefully chosen. Images in history textbooks are not only illustrating the written part of the schoolbooks, the pictures are furthermore used to teach the students about past times. Espe-

cially graphic reconstructions and pictures of everyday life are often used there for teaching. But these kinds of images are often highly problematic: the illustrations of everyday life in the past often try to show so many aspects at once that they are crowded out by details, and simplify too many aspects (Sénécheau 2008, esp. 73–76; Allinger 2007). Unfortunately, in most cases archaeologists are neither part of the authors team that writes the text for history schoolbooks, nor are they asked for advice when the illustrations for the textbooks are chosen. Often, the authors do not know which images are in the end part of their chapter – the pictures are mostly chosen from the editors of a textbook by criteria like “how much does it cost to use the image” or “didn’t we have a nice picture for this topic in the last decades schoolbook”? (Degenkolb/Gutsmiedl-Schümann 2012).

The contribution of Lourdes Prados-Torreira and Clara López-Ruiz (*The Image of Women in Spanish Archaeological Museums during the last Decade. A Gender Perspective*) opens the second part of the book. They demonstrate how gender relations in past societies are portrayed in recently opened or renovated exhibitions and how different concepts of gender are presented. Claudia Merthen (“*Archäologie und Geschlecht*” im Germanischen Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg – Eine Bestandsaufnahme) shows how little attention is paid to the gender issue within permanent museum exhibitions, also focusing on the unequal career conditions for men and women and museum pedagogics. A similar analysis of an exhibition concept is presented in Kirsten Eppler’s paper (*Frau – Mann, Jung – Alt, Arm – Reich: Museale Darstellung und Visualisierung frühmittelalterlicher Gesellschafts- und Gender(re)konstruktionen im Landesmuseum Württemberg*). In her contribution (Horkheim, Klingenberg, Talheim – Geschlechterrollen in der Archäologischen Sammlung der Städtischen Museen Heilbronn), Christina Jacob illustrates how gender representation in the museum developed over two decades. Gabriele Zipf clearly shows how innovative an exhibition concept can be when it deliberately considers gender in (*Man the Hunter? Zur Konzeption von Geschlechterrollen im paläon, Forschungs- und Erlebniszentrum Schöninger Speere*).

Together, the articles in this book present important topics that are rarely considered. As archaeologists, we must ask ourselves several questions when it comes to visual representations of the past. How can we create diverse images? Is it enough to simply include what is been identified as “missing”? Is it possible to create images of the past without compromising complexity? How do we give them nuance and make them discursive without resorting to stereotypes and symbols? Is it even possible? It is important for archaeologists to

take reconstructions seriously and be aware of the types of messages they are sending. We also must become more comfortable with presenting scenes of the past that may be considered controversial. Academic archaeology moves forward through active debate and discussion – our images should do the same.

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## **Images of the Past in Academia and Popular Media**

