

SESSION TITLE: From natural shapes to abstract geometries: new data and current trends in the study of prehistoric personal ornaments

ORGANISER: Roberto Micheli (*Italy*)

SESSION PROPOSAL:

The recent discoveries and developments in the study of prehistoric personal ornaments have highlighted the antiquity, the complexity of employment and the relevance of such objects in prehistoric societies. Indeed, personal ornaments constitute a fascinating field of material culture having psychological, religious and sociological implications, since people used them to express their personality, to protect themselves from magic and illness, to indicate the belonging of individuals to particular groups and to underline their social status. Therefore, ornaments are not only simple aesthetic artefacts or costume embellishments, but rather they are effective means to convey complex information and messages which cannot always be inferred from mere archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, personal ornaments do not often receive the attention they deserve during excavations and have not yet been given due relevance in prehistoric research.

The aim of this session is to offer new data and an overview of current trends in the study of personal ornaments of prehistoric Europe. The session would allow scholars to present their latest research and discuss a number of issues, such as types and raw material variability, technological aspects, usewear and ornaments employment, circulation and trade, symbolic meaning, ancient costume. The session could be a unique opportunity to meet and debate, and could also be a starting point to establish a specific research branch on personal ornaments, with its own methodology and problems, within prehistoric studies. The session would be divided into two sections: one devoted to Palaeolithic and Mesolithic studies, the other to Neolithic studies.

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