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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Experimentelle Archäologie in Europa, Jahrbuch 2023

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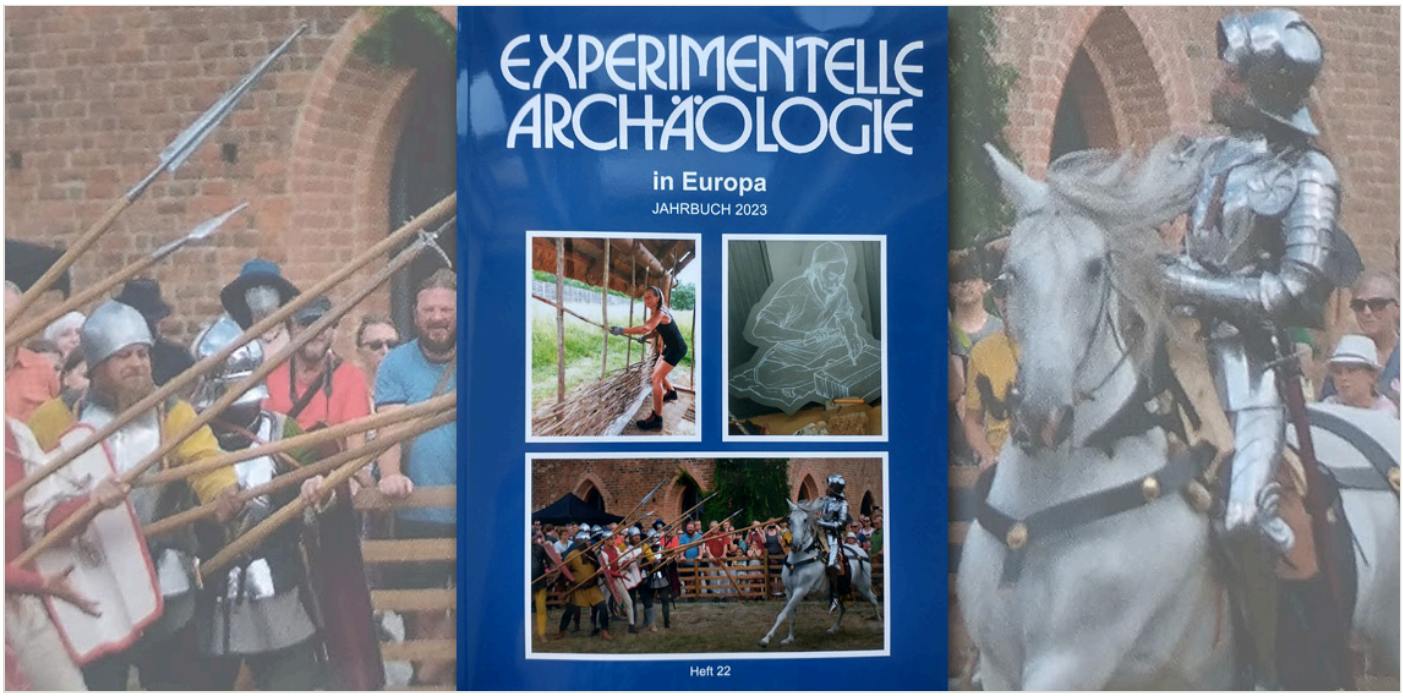
Author(s): Svenja Fabian [1] ✉

[1] Independent researcher, The Netherlands



The periodical is published by Gunter Schöbel and the European Association for the Advancement of Archaeology by Experiment e.V. (Europäische Vereinigung zur Förderung der Experimentellen Archäologie) EXAR, in collaboration with the Pfahlbaummuseum Unteruhldingen.

In 2022 EXAR hosted once again a conference without any restrictions, after the pandemic. It was held from 29th September until 2nd October at the Archäologisches Landesmuseum

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Brandenburg (Paulikloster) and was attended by 90 participants. The year 2022 also marked the 20th anniversary of EXAR.

As usual, the Jahrbuch 2023 contains essays from lectures held at the 2022 conference in, and was presented at the 2023 conference. This time the book consisted of 11 essays, as usual divided among the three sections Experiment und Versuch (Experiment and Attempt, pp.11-74), Rekonstruierende Archäologie (Reconstructional Archaeology, pp.75-1116) and Vermittlung und Theorie (Education and Theory, pp.117-182). The last section of the book doesn't consist of the annual report (pp. 189-192) and author guidelines (pp. 193-195) only; unfortunately there is an obituary for Jürgen Weiner (pp. 185-188) who was one of the first experimental archaeologists in Germany. The interview which he did for EXARC is also mentioned in the obituary (https://exarc.net/issue-2019-1/mm/interview-jurgen-weiner).

Before looking into the essays by section, I would like to point out the essay about the 20th anniversary of EXAR (U. Weller, 20 Jahre EXAR, pp. 171-182), which is part of the section Education and Theory. It gives a very good overview how EXAR came into being, how it even grew internationally over the years, and what its aims and activities are in the field of experimental archaeology and public education. Due to its good financial situation, the association is now able to promote several projects. The goal for the years to come is to further work to get the 'experimental archaeology' method accepted by universities and scientists.

The section Experiment and Attempt contains four essays covering a wide array of topics. The first essay is about a baking experiment (J. Kaiser, M. Sartori, C. Herbig, Backen für die Ewigkeit, pp. 11-27) which was based on the finds of remains of bread buns at the burial ground of Niederkaina (Saxony, Germany). The experiment included different manufacturing methods of the baking devices, production of the leavening agents, and grinding flour on a saddle quern. The Jahrbuch 2021 contained an article about the manufacture of a Greek linen cuirass, in the present volume the authors (M. Zerjadtke, J. Trosien, Anforderungen an und Leistungsfähigkeit von Leinenpanzern, pp. 29-44) looked at the efficacy of the linothorax against different type of weapons. For the pottery experiment (S. Klein, H. Zietsch, J. Sessing, A Karelian potter's technique for black lustrous pottery, pp. 45-59), the authors got into contact with a Karelian potter to see how his earthenware gets a black coating. In the experiment, various types of milk and methods of firing were used. The essay on forensic entomology (G. Stegmaier, Experimente zur forensischen Archäologie, pp. 61-74) showed an interdisciplinary approach between archaeology and legal medicine.

The Reconstructional Archaeology section consists of just two essays. The longest essay of this volume (W.F.A. Lobisser, W. Neubauer, Kreisgrabenzeit reloaded, pp. 77-102) looks at the issues with erosion that had occurred on the reconstructed houses from the Middle Neolithic period at an open-air museum in Lower Austria, and how these could be avoided when renovating the houses. The second article (H. Lehar, Auch ein rekonstruiertes Bauwerk wird älter, pp. 103-115) looked at a similar problem, this time at the reconstructed Burginatium gate in the Archaeological Park Xanten. While in Austria they stuck to using authentic materials; here people also used some modern material.

The last section, Education and Theory, contains four essays besides the essay on the 20th anniversary. The first one (G. Schöbel, "Uhldi"- 25 Jahre mediale und analoge Wissensvermittlung, pp. 119-131) describes how the idea to have an art figure as a mediator between the museum and the public was born after an episode for a popular German children's TV programme had been filmed at the Unteruhldingen Lake Dwelling Museum. In the meantime, there is not one museum educator slipping into the role of "Uhldi" but several, and even some "Uhldias", are promoting the museum on the tourist ships on Lake Constance. The next essay (F. Wollgast, ARCHÄOTECHNICA. Living History und Reenactment im Veranstaltungsgewand, pp. 133-140) covers a topic widely discussed in the museum world and among academics: how to integrate living history and reenactment at a museum event although most living historians/reenactors are laypersons and not academics. It is noted by the author that these laypersons did their research well and sometimes have even better knowledge about a specific time period or topic than an academic who was schooled in a broader sense. The following essay (T. Lessig-Weller, Vom Erz zum Schwert – Eine neue Präsentationseinheit zur eisenzeitlichen Gewinnung und Verarbeitung von Eisen, pp. 141-157) shows ways to present the exploitation and processing of iron during Celtic times in the open-air section of the Celtic museum at the Glauberg. The following essay (H. Rösel-Mautendorfer, Die Darstellung der Kleidung der Kelten und Gallier in Kostümwerken des 18. Bis 21. Jahrhunderts, pp. 159-170) is about the presentation of Celtic clothing in costume books from the 18th to the 21st century. It lists how Celtic clothing was presented in those books; unfortunately, the author didn't say how close those presentations were to our knowledge today.

Most of the articles are written in a way that you can follow the matter easily, even if you don't know anything about it. This even applies to such a dry and unusual topic as forensic entomology. The length of each essay is more or less the same, only the article on the house renovation appeared a bit too lengthy in my opinion. The essay on the Celtic clothing could have been a bit more detailed, especially relating it to our today's knowledge. All essays reflect in their variety the vast field of experimental archaeology and show the diversity of the members of EXAR. Still, although the periodical now bears the word 'Europe' in its title and the members come from many countries, most of the essays are still in German with a short abstract in English (only one was written in English although the authors are from the

university in Bochum) and deal with topics from Germany and Austria. Maybe EXAR should encourage its members outside the D-A-CH region to contribute to this periodical, to show a broader field where experimental archaeology takes places and to reach more interested readers with more articles in English.

Book information:

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Corresponding Author

Svenja Fabian
Independent researcher
Address withheld by the editors (GDPR)
the Netherlands
E-mail Contact