

Title: Chromatic Worlds: Colour Technologies, Material Choices and Symbolic Practices in Prehistory

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Abstract:

Colour played a fundamental role in ancient societies, shaping technological behaviours, communication strategies and symbolic expressions. Pigments were not only material resources but active agents in social practices, body modification, mortuary rituals and the visual enhancement of artefacts. Recent advances in mineralogical, chemical and micro-analytical analyses (SEM-EDS, Raman spectroscopy, FTIR, XRD, chromatographic techniques, etc.) now make it possible to reconstruct pigment provenance, transformation processes, modes of application and interactions with diverse substrates, including personal ornaments, lithics, ceramics, bones, architectural surfaces and human remains.

This session seeks to bring together interdisciplinary contributions exploring colour technologies and chromatic choices in ancient contexts, from prehistory to early historic periods, through multi-proxy approaches. Papers addressing pigment procurement strategies, chaînes opératoires, experimental reproduction, residue analyses, microscopic and traceological studies, taphonomic processes, and the biographical trajectories of coloured objects are particularly welcome.

By fostering dialogue between analytical sciences, experimental archaeology, ethnographic perspectives and symbolic interpretation, the session aims to advance a more comprehensive understanding of how colour shaped ancient worlds of meaning, identity-making and cultural innovation.

Keywords: Pigments, Mineral pigments, Colour technologies, Multi-proxy approaches, Material culture, Symbolic practices