The 18th European Archaeological Heritage Prize

(2016)

The European Heritage Prize is awarded annually to an individual, institution, or to a local or regional government for an outstanding contribution to the protection and presentation of the European archaeological heritage.

This year, the18th European Archaeological Heritage Prize has been awarded to

L'Unité d'archéologie de la ville de Saint-Denis

for exemplary achievements that unite archaeological heritage management and research with local community outreach, and

dr. Caroline Sturdy Colls

for her innovative contribution to the research on Nazi-German terror in camps and in massacres.

The metropolitan suburb of Saint-Denis is undergoing rapid transformations with more than 100 nationalities and a high unemployment rate amongst its 100,000 citizens. This transformation has caused a loss of spatial and temporal references. The work of the archaeological unit is yielding an important effort to restore a sense of belonging to the citizens by engaging them in the exploration of the rich and multifaceted history under their feet.

Through the program "Archaeology, territory and citizenship", the Unit is transforming archaeology into a tool for better analysis and knowledge of the area as well as a driver of social integration and qualitative development of the urban fabric. The program has already been running for many years, and has clearly made the city stronger and more resilient to overcome the conflicts embedded in its present social and economic complexity.

By awarding the European Heritage Prize to L'Unité d'archéologie de la ville de Saint-Denis the EAA wants to endorse and encourage an outstanding implementation of the idea of heritage and archaeology as community assets, in the spirit of the Valetta convention and the Faro convention. The unit has involved the citizens at the centre of an archaeological practice that reaches beyond development-led /preventive archaeology. Archaeology can and should be a resource for people living in today's complex communities of nested identities. L'Unité d'archéologie de la ville de Saint-Denis shows us how this can be achieved.

Sturdy Colls has engaged in a new kind of comparative forensic research in different parts of Europe and in intensive dialogue with others. Questioning both historical and spatial data of several iconic as well as relatively 'forgotten' sites, and combining all kinds of sources, archaeological, visual and digital techniques and spatial knowledge from interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives, she positioned herself in short time right into the centre of a new kind of ground-breaking Holocaust research. In her unique way of combining well-informed small-scale excavations and non-invasive Lidar and mapping techniques, based on detailed literature and archival research, witness testimonies, and local knowledge, her work has already become cutting edge.

In short, Sturdy Colls' unique talent in combining a strong drive for truth-finding with a deep concern with the ethics of digging in other people's past, and her ability to attract a diversity of scholars, heritage professionals, geophysical and IT technicians, and local and religious leaders to support her mission, and to address the general public by means of press interviews and TV broadcasting, makes her one of the most promising scholars in conflict and Holocaust archaeology. Her research has added significant quality to the presentation of the sites to visitors. In addition Sturdy Colls has demonstrated both entrepreneurial skills and a unique talent for motivating those who work with her in the projects.

By awarding the European Heritage Prize 2016 to Dr Caroline Sturdy Colls the EAA wants to endorse and encourage her unique work that has demonstrated the power of archaeology by adding crucial insights to a European heritage that represents some of the darkest moments of our history. It is a darkness that must remain exposed and understood by us now and in the future, so that we can confront it in whatever guise it might threaten us again.