



Mrs Louisa Hutten
Chief Scientific Officer
Department of Archaeology
University of Cape Town

Nos références :

Vos références : Exposition « Oxydes. Couleurs et métaux »

Objet : Pauline Rolland

Dossier suivi par : 22 août 2022

Date :

Dear Madam,

The National Museum of Prehistory located in Les Eyzies, Dordogne, in the south-west of France, is organizing a temporary exhibition from the 7th of October 2022 to the 9th of May 2023 entitled "Oxydes: couleurs et métaux".

Our museum, which is the most important museum of prehistory in existence, by the number of collections that are kept there, depends directly on the central administration of the Ministry of Culture. It presents to the public more than 1500 square meters of permanent exhibition covering 400 000 years of history of the Prehistoric societies (from the arrival of the first Neanderthals on the territory to the beginning of the Metal ages): tools of cut stone, bone industry, rich paleontological collections, human vestiges, burial, movable and parietal art, etc. (<https://musee-prehistoire-eyzies.fr/>)

The purpose of our next exhibition will be as follows:

"Metal oxides are abundant in nature, but hidden because they are often mixed with other elements. However, their physico-chemical characteristics make them materials that were used very early on by humans, because of their specific characteristics, for their colouring power, and then for their ability to be shaped by their transformation into metal.

While the theme of colouring agents in the Palaeolithic is often approached from a cultural perspective and that of metal from a technological one, this exhibition will seek to create a bridge between these perspectives and to present metal oxides from a techno-economic point of view, from the Palaeolithic to the turn of the First Iron Age: what do these metal oxides look like? What are the technological differences in the way they are worked to obtain dyes and metals, or can we find some common practices?

The link between these techno-economic considerations and uses will only be explored in a second stage. The diversity of these uses and usages leads to an assessment of the values associated with these metal oxides. Even though there have been obvious developments from a technological point of view, it will be seen that the concerns surrounding these materials and the sphere of their current and symbolic uses have not changed radically. This exhibition aims, in a transchronological approach, to present the latest research in archaeometry on oxides, both in their form as dyes and as metallic objects, and to observe prehistoric societies in their technical, everyday and symbolic relationships with these materials. This exhibition will also enable us to promote collections (including those of the MNP) that are still little known to the general public and rarely presented in such a cross-disciplinary manner."

In this context, we want to make it possible to understand the very early emergence in human societies of an interest in these colouring materials, their use and their highly symbolic character. In this aspect, Diepkloof rock shelter is a major site. Through one of our exhibition curators, Laure Dayet, who did her thesis work on these archaeological remains a few years ago, and Pierre-Jean Texier, a researcher who worked in Diepkloof and who is very close to our institution and its scientific and heritage activities, we know that your institution keeps these pieces. I am therefore officially requesting a loan of the Diepkloof material for this exhibition.

Our 138 m² temporary exhibition room is equipped with secure showcases into which materials for climatic stability can be inserted. The room is equipped with surveillance cameras linked to a security control station, the establishment being placed night and day, 365 days a year, under the vigilance of agents trained in safety and security. Please find attached the facility report of the museum for more information about the exhibition conditions.

I am of course at your disposal for any additional information.

I thank you very much for the attention you can give to this request,
Please accept my most sincere greetings,

Nathalie Fourment, Directeur de Préhistoire,
La Directrice du Musée national

Nathalie FOURMENT