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<https://www.ossolanews.it/2022/07/03/leggi-notizia/argomenti/antigorio/articolo/il-prestigioso-premio-balzan-a-giorgio-buccellati-e-marilyn-kelly-buccellati.html>

“The prestigious Balzan Prize to Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati”

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ANTIGORIO – **Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati**, internationally renowned archaeologists and lifelong couple, known for their research at the Urkesh site in Syria, will shortly receive the prestigious “Balzan Prize”.

The archaeologists are well known also in our territory for their cultural and research activities, as they are also the founders of the AVASA association – **“Associazione per la Valorizzazione dell’Archeologia e della Storia Antica”** [“Association for Furthering Value Archaeology and Ancient History”], which is based in Val d’Ossola, in Baceno, and has wide-ranging connections, in Italy and Europe, in the Near East and Asia, and in the United States. Always passionate and committed to archaeological research in Syria, they have a particular attention also for sharing knowledge and towards the younger generations. It is the young face of this new participatory and socially responsible archaeology that AVASA is promoting with innovative methods and systems, an example of which are the exchange initiatives that the association has promoted between local schools and some Syrian institutes.

The “Balzan International Foundation,” a prestigious institution operating between Milan and Zurich, which aims to encourage culture, science, and the most deserving humanitarian initiatives of peace and brotherhood among peoples, annually assigns the “Balzan Prizes” to scholars and

scientists who have been internationally distinguished. And the working team formed by Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati was awarded with the “2021 Balzan Prize for Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East.”

The prize was awarded to them with the following motivation:

“For the successes obtained in the study of the Hurrian culture and for having revealed its importance as the founder of a great urban civilization, one of the most flourishing of the Ancient Near East in the third millennium BC;” before the Buccellati couple’s research activity, in fact, the knowledge of the Hurrians was limited to mythological information and scarce artifacts of unknown origin. Their excavations have unearthed a thriving site with monuments, artifacts, and seals, illustrating the life and traditions of the Hurrians. But not just this. In addition to the important scientific results, the work of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati was admired for their success achieved in preserving the site through the active involvement of the local population, with a widespread cultural training and participation in the works of conservation, extended to the younger generations. *“For promoting the digital approach to the study of archaeology;”* Giorgio and Marilyn [Kelly-]Buccellati were among the first from the early eighties of the last century to understand the profound theoretical and intellectual implications of the use of computational techniques in structuring the archaeological information.

“For having cultivated theoretical approaches to this discipline.” The concept of “Archaeological Reason” has been stated by Giorgio Buccellati. A concept, an expression of his erudition and profound philosophical culture, which offers an evocative and fertile field of reflection on archaeological methodology, on excavations, on cataloguing and interpreting artifacts to reconstruct history.”

The two winners, both professors at the University of California Los Angeles, will receive the award on July 1, 2022 in Bern together with the other 2021 award winners. Each award amounts to 750,000 Swiss Francs (approximately 724,000 Euros), half of which is to be invested in research. In fact, since 2001, the regulations of the “General Prize Committee” require the winners to allocate half of the awarded prize to finance research projects conducted by young scholars.

(Photo from the “Balzan Foundation” website)