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(<https://www.ossolanews.it/2022/07/17/leggi-notizia/argomenti/cultura-e-spettacoli-4/articolo/conferito-il-premio-balzan-a-giorgio-buccellati-e-marilyn-kelly-buccellati.html>)

“The Balzan Prize has been awarded to Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati”

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On Friday, July 1, at the Federal Palace in Bern, **Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati**, internationally renowned archaeologists and a couple in life, known for their research at the Urkesh site in Syria, were awarded with the prestigious “2021 Balzan Prize for Art and the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East.” The prize was awarded to them: “For their successes in the study of Hurrian culture and for having revealed its importance as the founder of a great urban civilization, one of the most flourishing in the Ancient Near East in the third millennium BC; for promoting the digital approach to the study of archaeology; for having cultivated theoretical approaches to this discipline.”

The “International Balzan 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**. The prizes are worth 750,000 Swiss Francs (approximately 740,000 Euros) for each of the four subjects, and a half has to be allocated by the winners to research projects.

The archaeologists are well known also in our territory for their cultural and research activities, as they are also **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 also pay particular attention to the sharing of knowledge and to the younger generations.

The ceremony, in the presence of the President of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation **Irène Kälin**, was introduced by the President of the "Balzan Foundation," **Gisèle Girgis-Musy**, and by the President of the "Balzan Prize," **Alberto Quadrio Curzio**. According to the ceremonial procedure, each winner, presented by **Luciano Maiani**, President of the "General Prizes Committee," delivered a speech of acceptance and thanks.

"Marilyn and I – so Giorgio Buccellati in his speech – went to the field together for the first time in 1966. We spent a month in Syria, doing a survey in the steppe near Palmyra, and then three months in Iraq, digging in the ancient site of Nippur. Many other seasons of fieldwork followed, in Iraq, Turkey, Georgia, and especially in Syria, until the great project of Tell Mozan, the ancient Urkesh, where the excavations stopped in 2011 at the beginning of the war, at which point we began an intense activity of community archaeology with local stakeholders. The Balzan Foundation's award comes as the culmination of our effort, which has recently passed the milestone of half a century. By accepting it, we wish to express our deep gratitude for the recognition it gives of the theoretical and practical implications of our approach."