Five questions for Paola Villa[1]
[2]
[3]

Some have attributed the demise of Neanderthals to inferior intellect, but one University of Colorado Boulder researcher's work disputes the notion and has led her to become one of the world's foremost experts on Neanderthals.

Paola Villa, a curator at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, contends that evidence exists to show that our extinct ancestors were thoughtful hunters, herding bison and wild oxen over cliffs. They also had a diverse diet that included fruit, vegetables and nuts. Researchers also have found evidence that Neanderthals created ornamental objects and likely used pigments to paint their bodies and other items. Neanderthals lived in Europe and Asia between about 350,000 and 400,000 years ago.

Villa first came to the university as a lecturer in 1979 after earning a Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. The position was temporary, but she later became a research associate in the Department of Anthropology and in the Natural History Museum, and spent five years as a professor at the Institut de Prehistoire et Geologie du Quaternaire at the University of Bordeaux 1, France. In 1999, she returned to CU and the museum.
[4]

She was born in Italy, is fluent in French and Italian, and speaks and reads Spanish. Undoubtedly this knowledge is beneficial as she travels the world, studying her areas of interest: Old World prehistory; Neanderthal technology; the origins of behavioral modernity; the Middle Stone Age in South Africa; Lithic analysis, which is the study of stone tools and other chipped artifacts; Taphonomy (which includes the study of fossilization) and site formation processes; and cannibalism.

Villa loves history, including history books. Her current reading list includes Adrian Goldsworthy's "Pax Romana," which examines war and peace in the Roman Empire.

"I feel very fortunate that I had some of the best teachers in the world at Berkeley and that I have been able to get many grants from the United States, Europe and South Africa," she said.

1. How did you choose this career path? Was there an event or person who influenced you?

I was born and raised in Rome, so I grew up with archaeology. When I was 16, I read a book on archaeological discoveries and decided I wanted to be an archaeologist. Archaeology has never disappointed me.

2. You have been "defending" Neanderthals for several years, saying they were far more advanced than most researchers believe. How did you come to this conclusion and did you receive pushback from others?

I came to that conclusion because of an abundance of research, which is often known but not believed. And it was not easy to publish against the conventional view in high-profile journals.

3. You mentioned that you recently visited Italy. What did you accomplish while there?

I was doing research on the transition from Neanderthals to modern humans with the support of a Leakey Foundation Grant. I'm currently writing a paper for the Leakey grant and working on a second paper on the emergence of the Middle Paleolithic in Italy.

4. What has been the most surprising/exciting finding made during your career?

The discovery of butchery marks and breakage for marrow extraction of human bones, proving cannibalism at the cave site of Fontbregoua in France at about 4,000 BC. We published the findings in Science in 1986 and also wrote various other papers on the subject. This was a time when only Neanderthals and earlier hominids were supposed to be cannibals, but not modern humans (or at least not in the Western world). It was not politically correct.

5. Do you have a favorite item that you keep in your office?

I have posters of Italian Renaissance paintings (Michelangelo, Botticelli, Lorenzo Lotto) because they are beautiful to look at and remind you there is something in life beyond research (or cooking spaghetti).

Regents retreat focuses on big-picture trends facing higher education, how they work as a group[5]

Estes Park – The University of Colorado Board of Regents used its annual summer retreat to consider big-picture factors affecting the challenging environment in which the university operates, now and in the future, as well as to find ways the board can better work together to advance the university.

In the initial session, “Higher Education in a VUCA World: Harnessing the Power of Foresight,” facilitator Ron Gage stressed the importance of planning, despite a seemingly chaotic world. VUCA is an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

“Leaders are really struggling to make sense of a rapidly changing, rapidly shifting, rapidly evolving world,” Gage told the board.

The board, president, chancellors and president’s executive staff broke into small groups to brainstorm about trends and disruptions buffeting higher education and their implications. The consensus among the groups was that the primary trends include diminishing public perceptions about the value of higher education, increasingly tighter sources of funding, a changing student population in terms of age and diversity, technology’s pervasive impact and the ways people learn.

The notion is that those trends and disruptions drive insight, which informs strategy formulation. Board members said the exercise will help as it plans and budgets for the future.

In the afternoon session, CU Boulder Law Professor Scott Peppet worked with the board to focus on its governance processes. He led the board through an exercise that mapped out their role, articulated obstacles to effective governance and provided some tools to improve their processes.

“Three things happen simultaneously when we work together – the substance or what we’re working on, the relationship or how we get along, and the process or how we do the work,” he said.

He noted that the board has formal power as a group, not as individuals, and that they are tasked with setting strategic policy. He asked the board to consider gaps between what the governance process is supposed to look like and the reality of their work. He suggested that on the occasions when the board reaches sticking points, different personalities and perspectives are seemingly the reason. But a less obvious reason, and one the board should closely consider, is a challenging structure of their decision making that includes different experiences, the fact that they are publicly elected, different geographic bases that inhibit relationship building, the environment of public scrutiny in which the board works and time constraints.

Peppin suggested that board members be more curious about each other’s perspectives and motives, balancing advocacy with inquiry. He stressed the importance of thinking about long-term interests for the university, not just the issue at hand. He also said it was important for board members to look for ways to build personal relationships to better understand their colleagues.

“Think about their choice from their perspective, not from yours,” he said. “To influence their choice, you have to understand it as they experience it.”

Board members had universal praise for the session, with several saying they have a better understanding of their

roles and some tools to enhance their working relationship.

Regents' Strategic Vision coming clear[6]

It's close, but there are still tweaks to be made before the Strategic Vision is the refined framework the CU Board of Regents envisions will map out where the university plans to focus in the future. The board reviewed the second draft of the framework at its July retreat in Estes Park, providing positive feedback for the project overall.

The framework – proposed by the strategic planning committee in fall 2016 – is a systemwide initiative that defines the future of the university system and campuses, outlines CU's commitment to the state and identifies what sets it apart from other university systems across the country. The 12-page booklet will be used as a lodestar for the university and to help educate and promote the university and its four campuses among CU's constituents.

The board received the first draft of the document at its June meeting. The regents will continue to work on revisions throughout August and expect to finalize the publication at their Sept. 7-8 regular meeting at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

CU launches Ralphie's 50th anniversary campaign[7]

Tuition waiver pilot program expands campus options for dependents[8]
[9]

Do you have a dependent who currently attends or would like to attend the University of Colorado?

This fall, the Intercampus Dependent Tuition Waiver Pilot Program[10] expands the option for dependents of CU employees to earn a degree. Under this three-year program, dependents can attend any CU campus, regardless of the employee's campus of employment.

Employees and their dependents now have two tuition benefit options:
Option A – Home campus (current dependent tuition benefit): This option can be used when a dependent attends undergraduate or graduate classes (some exclusions may apply) on the employee's campus of employment. CU Denver, CU Anschutz and UCCS campuses can waive up to 9 credit hours per academic year. CU Boulder dependents can receive a 30 percent tuition discount. **Option B – Other Campus (Intercampus Dependent Tuition Waiver Pilot Program):** This option allows a dependent to attend class at a CU campus other than the employee's campus of employment. Eligible employees can receive up to $2,430 per academic year, which is around $270 per credit hour for up to 9 credits. This benefit applies only to undergraduate, credit-bearing classes.
Employees can choose only one option each academic year, and give their benefit to a dependent to use for the year. Watch a quick video to see which option best suits your needs:

The benefit only applies to the cost of tuition. All required campus-specific fees, taxes and other related educational expenses must be paid for by the employee or his or her dependent.

For both options, employees must waive their benefit to provide it to the dependent. The employee-only tuition benefit remains unchanged.

Employee Services will begin accepting tuition benefit applications for fall 2017 on July 21.

Take advantage of this benefit by visiting the Employee Services' website for full details, including comparison handouts and FAQs.[10]

Theatreworks wins Henry Award; Murray Ross recognized[11]

In shadows, immigrants tell their stories[12]
[13]

On the seventh floor of CU Denver's Lawrence Street Building, a computer lab is just left of the elevators. On the wall near the lab door is a black-and-white poster that's hard to miss. It's a short but passionate introduction to Dona Laurita's exhibition, "Silhouettes: Stories of Immigration."

The project aims to tell the stories of immigrants in Colorado, without giving away each individual's identity. In photographs, subjects are silhouetted.

Laurita, a photographer and personal historian from Louisville, started her photography journey in the mid-1980s, where her first project was documenting an apple harvest on the Western Slope. Though she started out as a writer and poet, Laurita felt photography was a visual extension of storytelling.

"It was a way for me to sustain myself," Laurita said. She became a commercial photographer and owns the Dona Laurita gallery in Louisville.
[14]

Laurita's inspiration to create "Silhouettes" started a couple of years back, when she received a National Endowment for the Arts grant to work on a project, "Stories Matter," at Noel Community Arts School in Denver. The school was chosen to participate in the Turnaround Arts initiative, which aimed to improve student engagement.

Laurita taught photography basics and talked with students about identity and personal stories. Her experience led her to the idea of creating a large, accordion-book installation with silhouettes of her students on the outside and their personal stories on the inside.

"The book became a metaphor, that you can't judge a book by its cover," Laurita said. "We don't take the time to get to know a person and their story, and that became the beginning of me working with silhouettes."

Early last year, she started photographing and interviewing several immigrants and refugees, from friends to acquaintances.

"It felt like people were hopeful talking about their story and not so scared," Laurita said. After months of interviewing and taking photos of her subjects, she compiled her pieces and created "Silhouettes," which she calls her third child.

The ongoing project has received positive reviews, but Laurita, who has been compiling her second set of pieces, noticed the openness and courage she once saw in her subjects had dissipated.

"People don't want to share their stories because they are afraid," Laurita said. "It really is building trust, so that's how I started it. I kind of had to prove myself and prove that what I was doing was honoring what their story was about and how they wanted to be portrayed."

Each individual's story is paired with their silhouette – masking their identity and putting their story in the forefront.

From a Belgium physicist expressing their opinion about the American social system, to a Muslim woman admitting how difficult it can be to blend into society post 9/11, Laurita captured people from all walks of life.

Laurita's goal is to be able to visit the capital city of every state and interview immigrants, then showcase them in those cities with exhibitions.

"One of the components of this project is community," Laurita said. "The work is far from being over because we need to hear from our immigrant community. That's what our country was built on."

If there's one thing Laurita wants people to take away from her project, it's to learn compassion and empathy.

"I hope they're reminded of their humanity through this project," Laurita said. "I'm honored that people open up to me, and they really share their deep revelations and feelings."

Dilkush Khan is a student at CU Denver.

Senior executives from film and virtual reality industries join behavioral health center[15]

Researchers to study neurological effects of Zika virus in children[16]

Samet named dean of Colorado School of Public Health[17]

Boult chosen 2017 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Fellow [18]

Timmerhaus Ambassador offering lectures/workshops on attracting and retaining diverse teachers[19]

Timmerhaus Teaching Ambassador[20]Margarita Bianco[21], associate professor of special education and teacher education in the School of Education and Human Development at CU Denver, is offering the opportunity for urban and rural K-12 schools, universities and nonprofits in Colorado and nationwide to engage with her during a lecture tour over the next two years. Her Timmerhaus Teaching Ambassador role supports her ability to provide lectures/workshops for organizations that are selected to participate in the tour. Those interested in having Bianco visit their institution can find out more and submit their request here.[22]

Leigh to join anthropology faculty; White to serve as A&S dean[23]

Gal publishes on Pasteur[24]

Joseph Gal, a chemist and professor emeritus at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, recently explained how Louis Pasteur struggled to show how some molecules exist in mirror-image forms, called chirality, in a paper published in Nature Chemistry.

An article in The New York Times discussed Gal's work and chiral drugs. Some of these drugs have mirror-image molecules that are dangerous, according to the Times, while others, such as ibuprofen, do not.

Click here[25] to see the Times article.

In memoriam: Paul Ballantyne[26]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-paola-villa[2] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/5q_villa_top.jpg[3] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/5q_villa_01.jpg[4] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/5q_villa_02.jpg[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/regents-retreat-focuses-big-picture-trends-facing-higher-education-how-they-work-group[6] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/regents-strategic-vision-coming-clear[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-launches-ralphie-s-50th-anniversary-campaign[8] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/tuition-waiver-pilot-program-expands-campus-options-dependents[9] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/tuition-bene_top.jpg[10] https://www.cu.edu/employee-services/benefits/tuition-benefit/dependent-tuition-waiver-options[11] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/theatreworks-wins-henry-award-murray-ross-recognized[12] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/shadows-immigrants-tell-their-stories[13] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/silhouettes_01.jpg[14] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/silhouettes_02.jpg[15] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/senior-executives-film-and-virtual-reality-industries-join-behavioral-health-center[16] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/researchers-study-neurological-effects-zika-virus-children[17] https://connections.cu.edu/people/samet-named-dean-colorado-school-public-health[18] https://connections.cu.edu/people/boult-chosen-2017-institute-electrical-and-electronics-engineers-fellow[19] https://connections.cu.edu/people/timmerhaus-ambassador-offering-lecturesworkshops-attracting-and-retaining-diverse-teachers[20] https://sehd.ucdenver.edu/impact/2017/02/16/cu-denvers-bianco-named-timmerhaus-teaching-ambassador/[21] htt p://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/SchoolOfEducation/FacultyandResearch/Pages/MargaritaBianco.aspx[22] http://www.cvent.com/events/free-lecture-workshop-attracting-and-retaining-diverse-teachers/event-summary-97466c6aa4524e239c8615952e4e7778.aspx[23] https://connections.cu.edu/people/leigh-join-anthropology-faculty-white-serve-dean[24] https://connections.cu.edu/people/gal-publishes-pasteur[25] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/14/science/louis-pasteur-chirality-chemistry.html?_r=1[26] https://connections.cu.edu/people/memoriam-paul-ballantyne