



International Balzan Foundation

Press release - 11 September 2023

The Balzan Prizes 2023 in the name of interdisciplinarity the Peace Prize awarded to Francesca Rava Foundation

Each of the prizes is worth 750,000 Swiss francs (784,000 euros, 840,000 USD)

Today in Milan, the Presidents of the Balzan Foundation 'Prize' Alberto Quadrio Curzio and of the Balzan General Prize Committee Luciano Maiani announced the winners of the annual Balzan Prizes for Science and Culture, two in the physical and natural sciences and two in the humanities. This year, the special prize for humanity, peace and brotherhood among peoples was also awarded.

The winners of the 4 annual awards

- **David Damrosch** (USA) - Harvard University for **world literature**,
- **Jean-Jacques Hublin** (France) - Max-Planck-Institut für evolutionäre Anthropologie Leipzig (Germany) for **human evolution: palaeoanthropology**,
- **Eske Willerslev** (Denmark) - University of Copenhagen for **human evolution: ancient DNA and human evolution**,
- **Heino Falcke** (Germany) - Radboud University Nijmegen (The Netherlands) and Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy, Bonn for **high-resolution images: from planetary to cosmic objects**.

The choice was based on the validity, topicality and coherence of the research, identifying specific factors of excellence that can contribute to the understanding of our world and our time, promoting the advancement of knowledge without borders, in accordance with the guiding principles of the Balzan Foundation.

In 2023, two of the four prizes (one in the humanities and one in the sciences) were united by a single denominator, that of human evolution. The criterion adopted is that of interdisciplinarity, in the conviction that only the fruitful cross-fertilisation of knowledge and research from different fields can make it possible to tackle the complex problems posed by nature and society.

The four prize-winning subjects change every year and are chosen in the two categories of literature, moral sciences and the arts and the physical, mathematical and natural sciences and medicine. The rotation of subjects allows new or emerging lines of research to be favoured.

The value of each Prize is 750,000 Swiss francs (784,000 euros, 840,000 USD), half of which goes to research projects carried out by young scholars.

The winner of the prize for humanity, peace and brotherhood among peoples

- **Francesca Rava Foundation** (Italy)

The Prize for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples is a special prize awarded by the General Prize Committee, assisted by a preparatory commission, at varying intervals of not less than three years. The award is intended to honour persons or institutions that have distinguished themselves for outstanding work of a humanitarian nature.

It is also worth 750,000 Swiss francs.

The Balzan Prizes 2023 will be presented in Bern on 17 November in the presence of the President of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation, Martin Candinas.

At the conclusion of the announcement of the 2023 Balzan Prize winners, the President of the General Prize Committee, Luciano Maiani, announced **next year's prize-winning subjects, 2024:**

- **Restorative Justice** ■ **History of Modern and Contemporary Science**
- **Biological Mechanisms of Ageing** ■ **Nanoporous materials for environmental applications**



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The motivations for the Balzan Prizes 2023

to **David Damrosch** for world literature

For his creative approach to world literature as a transnational circulation of works that remain alive because they are embraced and changed beyond their culture of origin. For his stupendous knowledge of Western and non-Western literatures in all their geographical breadth and historical depth.

to **Jean-Jacques Hublin** for human evolution: palaeoanthropology

For the importance of his discoveries in the field, notably that of the oldest Homo sapiens in Africa; for his ability to synthesise data from cutting-edge technologies; for his skills in organising scientific teams, notably as head of the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig; and for his qualities as a teacher and populariser.

to **Eske Willerslev** for human evolution: ancient DNA and human evolution

For his studies on human DNA with an evolutionary perspective focusing on population mobility and migrations and thus to a large extent contributing to transform our understanding of human history. For leading the way in using ancient DNA (from teeth) to identify human pathogens and for retrieving DNA directly from environmental samples, opening a new scientific field.

to **Heino Falcke** for high-resolution images: from planetary to cosmic objects

For being the first to envision imaging the immediate surroundings of a black hole, and for his leadership of the "Event Horizon Telescope", specifically designed for this purpose. This telescope produced the sharpest images ever of what surrounds black holes in the distant galaxy known as M87 and in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, thereby validating Einstein's General Relativity in situations where gravity is so strong that spacetime is significantly curved.

The motivation for the Prize for Humanity, Peace and Fraternity among Peoples:

to **Francesca Rava Foundation**

For its commitment since 2000 in emergency interventions following humanitarian and natural disasters in Italy and Latin America (in cooperation with Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos) and for specific initiatives taken in favour of children in Latin America to combat educational and food shortages.

The Balzan Prize figures from 1961 to the present day

Annual prizes awarded: 163 - Prizes for peace, humanity and brotherhood among peoples: 12

in the humanities 86 - in scientific subjects 77

persons 181 of which 15 women

humanities subjects of the award 70 - scientific subjects 71

value of prizes awarded to date 115,925,000 Swiss francs (of which 13,450,000 for "Peace" Prize) - of which invested in research 38,375,000

nations 32

The International Balzan Foundation, founded in 1956, operates through two branches. The International Balzan Foundation 'Prize', in Milan, is chaired by Alberto Quadrio Curzio. Through the General Prize Committee, chaired by Luciano Maiani, it chooses the subjects to be awarded and selects the candidates. The International Balzan Foundation "Fund", in Zurich, presided over by Gisèle Girgis-Musy, administers the estate left by Eugenio Balzan, in order to provide the International Balzan Foundation "Prize" with the financial means it needs to fulfil its aims.