

## Raising Hair | EXARC

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### Guests

Janet Stephens (US) and Dorothee Olthof (NL)

### Introduction

A universal experience, hair has often formed a fundamental part of human self-expression and identity. But how can we see changes in hairdressing and styling throughout history and how can experimental reconstruction help us start creating a picture of the people of the past? Our guests **Janet Stephens** and **Dorothee Olthof** join us on this month's Finally Friday to discuss their experiences understanding ancient hairdressing.

### Transcript

**Phoebe:** Hello and welcome to #FinallyFriday. This chat session is run by EXARC, the society for archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, ancient technology, and interpretation. My name is Phoebe Baker and today I am joined by two specialists from our EXARC community focusing on ancient hairdressing. Janet Stephens is a professional hairdresser and experimental archaeologist specializing in ancient hairdressing, focusing mainly on ancient Greek and Roman hairstyling. Although occasionally branching out into Renaissance and Victorian beauty, Janet uses a variety of literary and artistic sources to accurately recreate these hairstyles on live models. Janet's research has been highlighted by the Wall Street Journal, BBC and NPR, and she also runs a popular YouTube channel showcasing her work.

Dorothee Olthof is an archaeologist and founder of PRAE, which specializes in archaeology and education with a focus on daily life in the past. As part of this interest in daily life, Dorothee has specialisms in prehistoric, Roman, and medieval hairdressing, and she can often be found at festivals, workshops and open days, demonstrating these skills to the public. Dorothee stresses the importance of experimental reconstruction and believes strongly in experiencing the past with all senses.

So welcome to you both. And thank you so much for joining me. I have a quick question to start you off. Why do you think hair is an important aspect of the past to study?

**Janet:** I think hair is a great avenue for studying the past because it is something that has not biologically changed during the period of homo sapiens. So the hair that we have today is similar or identical to the hair in antiquity. It's just what we're able to do with it with modern technologies that differs. So when you discuss hair in archaeology, audiences can really relate to it on a level that is much more difficult, say, in a building foundation or a ruin because you don't have to imagine what hair is like, because you already have it on your head. So you've already got a reference point.

**Dorothee:** I think as archaeologists, we try to study the people of the past and what is more personal than people's hair and the way they wear it? In a sense, an important message I think about identity and what people find important in their lives and social distinctions. I think it's very personal, but also it sends a big message and it's really interesting to study these things because we don't only want to know what the buildings look like and know what crops they farmed, but I personally would really love to know what the people looked like and what they thought about things.

**Phoebe:** I know that you both came into ancient hairdressing through quite different avenues. So do you want to give us a little bit of background on how you got involved in ancient hairdressing? Janet, would you like to go first?

**Janet:** Ancient hairdressing for me was a complete accident. I am a commercial hairdresser and I was waiting for my daughter to get out of a music lesson one day. So I was killing some time in a local museum and they had displayed their Roman collection in a way that I was unfamiliar with. They had just completely rebuilt the collection and done a huge remodel. So they set a bunch of their best busts down in the middle of the room where you can see them from all directions. And since I'm a hairdresser, I stand in the back of people's heads all day and that's where hairdressing happens. So I had been prior to this completely unaware of the complexity and beauty of hairstyles as seen from the back, because most museum collections predilect the face and they will put displays of busts up against walls on high pedestals or on shelves, so that all you can see is the face. So for me, that was never particularly interesting.

**Dorothee:** I came from a different direction. I'm an archaeologist and I worked at the time at Archeon, it's an archaeological theme park here in the Netherlands. And we were always thinking about new ways to engage the public in a prehistoric life and prehistoric skills. And we thought 'oh, wouldn't hairdressing be fun?' because there are some hairstyles known from bog bodies. And we recreated them during our prehistoric

hairdressing activity in the museum. And that was great fun. And then one day somebody asked 'oh, you do prehistoric hairstyles. Maybe you can do Roman hairstyles as well?' And we thought 'oh yeah. Why not?' because more is known about Roman hair than about prehistoric hair. And so it sort of evolved.

**Phoebe:** So we have Janet who's come from a more hairstyling background and Dorothee has come from a more archaeological background. Do you think that it's more important to have a background in one or the other before you become involved or does it make a difference?

**Dorothee:** I think both is important and I think the background matters as to how you look at things. I think Janet has a more professional hairstyling view on things and probably a more practical view. She knows how to do these things or easier than I do or than I did when I started. And actually Janet has been a big inspiration for me. I've watched all her videos and read her articles and I thought 'oh, this is very good. I will step into her footsteps'. But the information you get is different if you have a different background, but I think either background can lead to good results because either background has to learn new things, right? Janet has to learn about the prehistory or the Romans and I have to learn about practical hairstyling things.

**Janet:** I think you've summed it up pretty well. I mean, I wish I had had more of an archaeological background because I've probably wasted a lot of time, not knowing where to look, to find sources and articles and things to help me understand what I thought I was doing. That being said, however, I feel like a broad interdisciplinary background, including as many manual skills as you can reasonably have, can be useful to the study of anything. And you'll find that something that seems completely separated from one craft can be heavily involved in another, like I discovered with hair sewing, because if I hadn't had my needlework background, I would never have been able to figure out the use of the needle in ancient Roman hairdressing.

**Dorothee:** I totally agree. The more practical skills you have, the better it is in all fields of archaeology I think. Especially in hairdressing, because it's really hands-on.

**Phoebe:** I definitely agree. And so both of you have spoken a little bit about how not having certain skills can be a hindrance on your work. So what is the biggest difficulty that you've encountered in your research so far?

**Janet:** Well, for me it has been visual sources because you know, I'm not a scholar, I don't get grants. I don't have an entire summer to travel. I'm lucky if I can get two weeks a year to go on vacation. So I really do rely on published sources and literally going to museums. I swear I pretty much plan all my vacations around visiting different museum collections at this point. But again, I can't stress enough the display problems in most museum collections is that they really do... and I get it, you're trying to protect the object, but we're not fully able to appreciate the object when it is displayed in such a way that you cannot see it from 360 degrees. So I'm really excited about like what the Musei Uffizi in Florence has done a 3D digitization project where you can look at ancient busts literally from any angle, even from beneath the pedestal. So that's been enormously helpful.

**Phoebe:** It's really cool. I'll definitely have to give that a look. Do you have anything to add, Dorothee?

**Dorothee:** Yeah, time is a big problem, I don't have any. I don't have any grants either, by the way. I'm an archaeologist but I'm not in a university or anything. I'm just self-employed...

**Janet:** Independent scholars...

**Dorothee:** ...and I'm trying to earn money doing public archaeology. So yeah, that's a lot of work and not much time for research. I try to go to museums as often as possible. And what I would really love is like in Denmark to look at the real bog body hair that has actually been found, in detail, but how do you manage that? There's still a lot to explore and a lot to study.

**Phoebe:** You've both spoken about how much you plan life around going to museums, or what kind of sources do you use? You've mentioned busts, bog bodies. Are there others? Do you have favorite types of sources to use?

**Dorothee:** Well, written sources can be useful too. And obviously statues and things like that, but my favorites are the real finds like the real hair, because then you actually have the real thing. People can write about things that haven't really existed in that way or they invent something. The statues, they can make them look much nicer than they were in real life. But if you have the real hair, well, that's the real thing.

**Janet:** I can certainly agree with that attitude. The only problem that I find with a lot of the existing artefacts is that they are so old. They're fragile, they're crushed, they're frowzy. It's sometimes hard to imagine them as that kind of living, moving material. I personally prefer the busts myself because they're three-dimensional, but any image, any visual image that has the correct views, I'm all about it. But, I would say, in terms of my own research, so much of what I have to do as a hair care professional is forget about the technologies I already know when I'm studying a particular period. So with the ancient Roman period, I literally have to check myself through museum catalogs and artefact tool collections, just to make sure that I'm not presuming the existence of a tool that I cannot defend, you know, like the idea of clips or bobby pins et cetera. Lots of folks have and made that assumption that they were available. But if they're not in the archaeological record, you really aren't being honest if you try to use them.

**Phoebe:** That's a really interesting point. Do you have anything to add to that Dorothee, about how important it is to be able to use as authentic tools as possible?

**Dorothee:** I think it's really important also to understand how they did things and how it feels and what it looks like if you used real tools and yeah, it does make a difference. If you use bobby pins and what are they called, these elastic thingies? Sometimes it's even more difficult with those modern things because they don't work in the way the ancient hairstyles work. And they get in your way because you can't take them out, whereas when you bind it with like wool or leather, leather thread, you can take it out. Maybe you

need to. So yeah, I think it's really important to use the original..., well, as close to as possible, original tools. Also for yourself, so you can feel more what it was like to be a hairdresser in Roman times.

**Janet:** Now I would say the one thing that I do get tripped up with when I'm doing live demonstrations, is that we're at the mercy of the haircut that the model brings.

**Dorothee:** Oh yeah, definitely!

**Janet:** It's very hard to find models who have just let their hair grow out to its complete length because the thready, wispy ends of fully grown out hair add properties to the hairstyle that make them actually sometimes easier than when you've got a blunt waist length bob, you know. If we had that extra length, we could do more or we could make it stay better.

**Dorothee:** Plus all these blunt ends, they keep sticking out and I often do hairdressing demonstrations at Roman festivals and things. And then all these little girls come and they have only three hairs on their heads and they still want these fantastic hairstyles. We have to get really creative!

**Janet:** But at the same time one of the cool things about it, I think is that the hairstyle is just a set of mechanical actions you perform on it. The finished hairstyle is the combination of those actions and the material brought to it by the person wearing it. So you can put on an identical hairstyle, you did all the same stuff, but they'll look very, very differently because of the individual wearing it. So I feel like oftentimes we forget the human variable that is brought into this because most of the busts that we ever see are just a snapshot of an individual at a particular time as far as was possible for the period and transferring that idea onto another head of hair is very hard to do, just in your mind.

**Dorothee:** And also the structure of the hair. I'm a real fan of Mediterranean hair, all these Moroccan girls, I love them. They have fantastic hair. It works perfectly. But the Dutch girls...mmm, not so.

**Janet:** Not so much... Well, remember the Mediterranean girls were there at the time, you know?

**Dorothee:** Yeah and I even once heard a girl, she also was a hairdresser actually, and turned archaeologist. And she said that, the Roman hairstyles, they work best with Mediterranean hair because that's where they were invented. And if you look at medieval hairstyles, they're much simpler because they are more adapted to Northern European hair. Would you agree?

**Janet:** I kind of agree with that to a certain extent, but also, I would throw in philosophy and religion into that because at a certain point, you know, after the third, fourth century Christianity decreed that most women, especially married women, would keep their hair covered. So if you are going to be covering your hair there's no real reason to do

elaborate styling underneath, cause nobody's going to see it. So the focus of beauty and elaborateness and display transferred from the hair itself to the head dress, covering the hair, in my humble opinion.

**Dorothee:** Maybe, yeah. If you look at Islamic ladies, underneath all the headscarves they are really beautiful and they do care and they do interesting things with their hair.

**Janet:** No, absolutely. I'm just thinking in terms of the limitations of daily life in antiquity and medieval periods, is that there were not as many possibilities or artistic trends, shall we say, that would allow more insular communities to show off in that way. Under a burka, yes, you can have an amazing Chanel outfit and lovely hair. But that is not, I expect what was going on in the 12th century.

**Dorothee:** Actually the Roman ladies were also supposed to cover their hair in public, but then they are hardly ever depicted like that.

**Janet:** Well, it depends on the context. I cannot say with any certainty why particular statues were made the way they were, but there is that large vein of - how shall I call it - the piety? The pious donor, sacrificant - I'm not even sure if I'm pronouncing that right - where you will have the head covered and the patera in one hand, and they'll be shown making a sacrifice, but in terms of funerary portraiture, I could argue that if it was made for a tomb the donor themselves, or the person being... a decedent, shall we say, would not necessarily have to be depicted in a pious attitude since they're the one who is now being sacrificed to by the family cult. So I don't know. I think it's a lot of range here.

**Dorothee:** I saw one question in your list, Phoebe, what is a big problem in your research? It's headscarves.

**Phoebe:** Yeah, it sounds like it!

**Janet:** Absolutely, it's such a pain! Look at the late first century you have all of these sacrificant statues of women with those exuberant bangs showing out from in front of their veils on top. I think it's hilarious.

**Phoebe:** So would you say headscarves are an issue that you find in a lot of time periods? And then if not headscarves, do you find commonalities in hairstyles between any of the time periods that you study? Because you both have some experience of multiple time periods?

**Janet:** No, I think there are some universal styles. The bond at the back of the neck just seems to be omnipresent in practically every period or just the single braid or the single two braids on the side, those seem to be really just the basics. If you wear a braided bun today, you could shoot back to the second century AD and fit right in.

**Phoebe:** Mmm, that's an interesting point.

**Dorothee:** Yeah, they are so basic, these hairstyles. If you have to get your hair out of the way, because you're cooking on a fire or you just want it out of your way, that's the easiest thing to do, isn't it? That's braid it or pin it up in a bun.

**Phoebe:** So it tends to be the simple one. You touched earlier on the differences between using... so Janet, you mentioned about how bobby pins actually can make the hair quite painful and the sewn hairstyles that you've concentrated on are quite comfortable. Could you comment on that a little bit?

**Janet:** Well, bobby pins were invented in the early 20th century in order to hold very short hairstyles in place. So what it does is it's a kind of a spring steel that when bent and crimped in a particular way, it exerts an independent compressive force on the hair, so you can slide it in and it will hold even really, really silky hair in place. It'll just stay there. Whereas if you're trying to do a very elaborate braided style and it covers a great deal of area on the back of the head, bobby pins, at least the way they're made today, you need to put in so many of them that they will start to pinch the supporting scalp hair and pull it and make the hair of the scalp feel painful. It can even pull out some of the hair. So by the time you get enough pins in nobody wants to wear the hairstyle because it can be very, very uncomfortable. Whereas with a thread style... thread is almost woven into the braiding or the twisted hair or what have you. And it remains flexible, yet it's a single continuity that weaves through the hair and then can be bound with maybe some circular stitches in one spot and it conforms to the head. It's a lighter weight and tends to be extremely comfortable as well as very durable. So I've often had demonstration models comment independently on 'oh, gee, how light this feels, how comfortable it feels! And yet it feels like it's going to stay'.

**Dorothee:** Actually, a hairdresser once told me when I was demonstrating the Roman hairstyles at a festival, she said 'oh, you do the hair sewing, I do it too for bridal hairstyles' exactly because of what you just said about bobby pins, they're really painful and they tend to fall out too and then your hair comes undone during your wedding which is not what you want. So she did it also for really complicated hairstyles.

**Janet:** This is the thing, the techniques have been hiding in plain sight and have been reinvented or reapplied independently. It's just trying to make those connections, realizing there's a connection to be made and then making it is the hard part.

**Dorothee:** Did you come up with the hair sewing because you already knew it from your own practice?

**Janet:** Well, I did not do it in my own practice before I started becoming interested in ancient hairstyles. What it was was I saw empress Julia Domna's second portrait [type], which literally to me looked like a rag rug. I don't know if you're familiar with that craft, but you braid strips of fabric and then you sew them together along their edges to create carpets. My grandmothers used to make these. After I had been stumped a few days trying to recreate Julia's hairstyle, I thought to myself, holy crimony, that looks like a rag rug. So that was when the connection made. But if I had seen any other hairstyle from ancient Rome, I might never have gotten started on this because it just stumped me.

**Dorothee:** Yeah, most people, right? Once I started doing it and putting lots of little hairpins in it and I thought, 'oh, this doesn't really look good and it doesn't keep well, how can we do this?'

**Janet:** Yeah, and the styles that are very vertical or that defy gravity, shall we say, like certain forms of the tower hairstyle, without sewing it's... don't even start. It's not going to work.

**Dorothee:** No, no and the pins. I mean the hairpins that they did have, they don't work for that either.

**Phoebe:** Hairstyling and beauty seem to be traditionally more seen as quite a female or feminine aspect of life to study. Do you agree with that and can you see that reflected in the types of people that are engaging with your research?

**Dorothee:** Well, it's mostly women, aren't they, who study this? Whereas if you look at the Roman period, for instance, the men were just as vain as the women. So for them, it was important for both of them. But if you look at archaeology now, it's mostly women who study textiles and beauty and things related to that. That's true. But even if you look at the men today, I mean, they still care about how they look. So I don't know why they see it as a feminine subject.

**Janet:** I feel like this is kind of bound up in the historical separation between who was allowed to study and who was not, from at least 300-400 years ago, if not in antiquity itself, because it's men who have formed the value system of what is important to study and what is not important to study, and men have always concentrated on wars, political, legal things that... I don't know if it's a natural interest to them, but it is the sectors that men have carved out for themselves and then the stuff they don't want to deal with, child-rearing, clothing production, farming, hairdressing and grooming is relegated to a second class citizenship and made to be feminized. And I think it's a real mistake because a lot of that scholarship is dismissed, especially in 19th and early 20th century scholarship and we're trying now to correct the misconceptions that they created.

**Dorothee:** I quite agree. They sort of missed half of life by not [studying] things like women and children...

**Janet:** ...discounting half of life...

**Dorothee:** Yeah, and just normal everyday life, just focusing on the political and the wars and the military.

**Janet:** You can still see it in the books that they create for classrooms and for popular audiences, the cover always has a gladiatorial game on the front, and then it goes from all of the blood and guts stuff for the first 500 pages. And then there's maybe 25 pages on women and family and marriage at the very back of the book. Have you noticed that?

**Dorothee:** Oh, yes, definitely. My daughter, when she was smaller, she had a history book for school and we were looking at the pictures and there was a picture of a Roman market, I think it was. And she was looking at it and she said, 'Were there no women in Rome?' And I was looking at the picture and really, there's not one single woman on the picture.

**Phoebe:** Wow, that's really bad.

**Dorothee:** So there's still a lot of work to do.

**Janet:** Agreed.

**Phoebe:** A lot of work to do, but do you think it's improving?

**Dorothee:** Yes. I think it is. People are thinking more about gender in archaeology. I mean also in like: who studies archaeology, who are the archaeologists, but also about gender in past times and who did what? So there's more interest in it now.

**Janet:** I can agree with that too but since I don't really have a kind of an ongoing public face... I sort of do lectures and seminars occasionally, but I'm not out there on the front lines of open-air museuming. I can agree with that, that it is improving. And I see, I'd say a pretty good mix of genders in the talks that I present. So that's also encouraging.

**Phoebe:** That is really encouraging. I'm glad to hear. And so you've both in the last couple of sentences touched on public outreach and you both do different types of public outreach. What kind of advantages can we take from digital versus in-person and then open-air reenactment type things? What kind of advantages, disadvantages or differences do we see between the various types of public outreach?

**Dorothee:** Well, the last one and a half years, Janet definitely had a bigger audience than I did because I couldn't go anywhere with my hairdressing. When there is a pandemic YouTube is better.

**Janet:** It is true. I liked doing YouTube, although it's not a perfect medium but it's nice to be able to do your best on something, even if it's really pretty bad and just have it out there for people to find. So I've gotten a lot of very sweet and gracious correspondence from my classroom teachers who were doing a unit and discovered my films and used them in their classes. I regularly go to schools whenever I'm invited to do lecture demonstrations for their Latin classes and social studies courses. That is nice, especially since my day job is pretty intense doing seven hours on my feet four days a week.

**Dorothee:** I think both is important to do. It's big fun to do with people live during festivals and demonstrations, but if you have these YouTube videos, people can always look at them again. And very often I reference you, Janet. I say 'oh, go look at Janet's channel if you want to know how to do this yourself, cause it's really, really helpful.' They're very well made your videos, it's very clear and you can totally understand how it works. I don't have a YouTube channel not because I don't like it, but because I don't have the time, that's basically it. And I think Janet is already doing it, so why should I do it?

**Janet:** No, we need more! Because there's so many different interpretations. Because I've chosen to do a hairstyle a particular way it doesn't mean that that's the only way it can be done. I would like definitely to have way more voices involved cause every hairstyle is different, every hairdresser is different and the more the merrier in my view.

**Dorothee:** Yeah, that's true and there's still more periods to do. There's not much prehistoric hairstyling on YouTube. Maybe I should look into that.

**Phoebe:** Actually, I had a question, while you were talking about engaging with the public. Do you think that the people that engage with your work in these kinds of things will come up to you are people that already have an interest in ancient hairstyling? Or do you think they're people that have kind of stumbled on it and then become interested as you talk to them more.

**Dorothee:** I think that depends on where you are doing it. When I do it on a festival, everybody just passes and sees what's happening and even people who never thought about Roman or prehistoric hair in their life, then they think about it and they get interested. Whereas if you're on YouTube, I suppose people have to be interested in hair to actually find you.

**Janet:** I can agree with you definitely on that. The YouTube channel is nice because if people are searching for something they are as likely to find it as not, it's just making sure that your search engine is optimized, but I find it really depends on the context. I've done some museum demonstrations where basically just people want a free hairstyle. They have no interest in what you're doing. They'll just say, you're going to give me a hairstyle, sure, I'll take that. It's pretty funny. Sometimes especially little girls oh, they so want to have their hair done.

**Dorothee:** Their mothers too, if they have long enough hair.

**Janet:** Yeah, exactly. They're always crushed when, you know, they have a chin length bob, and you say, well, there's not enough to do there.

**Dorothee:** Well, you can always put in some little braid somewhere...

**Janet:** That's true, but they usually fall in love with the Fonseca bust or some frothy edifice where they'll have pin straight, just silky hair and they want those big curls or vice versa.

**Dorothee:** Do you ever do curls on the public?

**Janet:** I try not to. I have done them for a couple of lectures and it was among the most thankless tasks I've ever performed because you cannot control the humidity in a presentation. And I did one, it was for the Society of Biblical Literature where I curled this poor girl's hair for probably an hour and it just kept relaxing and getting straight again.

**Dorothee:** Yeah, sometimes it just doesn't work.

**Janet:** Actually that's part of an article I'm doing for the EXARC volume on approaches to experimental archaeology. I have a couple of paragraphs on humidity and how it's not your friend!

**Dorothee:** Yeah, sometimes it can be really complicated. Once we had to film for the museum in Tongeren, the Gallo-Roman museum and they wanted me to use a curling iron that actually went into the fire.

**Janet:** Oh boy, you're a brave woman!

**Dorothee:** I said I don't want to do it, we can fake it. We can fake it with a modern curling iron. And then I put a curl around this Roman thing and then tada! I made a curl and they said, no, no, no, we want you to do it for real. And it was a real model. And I thought, oh when I burn the hair that would be so terrible. But it worked.

**Janet:** I'm not sure I would have agreed to do that.

**Dorothee:** Well, I will never do it again. We had to try many things for those films because they wanted us to turn models from nothing like not made up, no hairstyling, nothing, into complete Roman beauty. We did waxing and we did singeing as well, actually, because that was one of the methods that Romans used and we tried it all on ourselves first, a friend and I, we did it together. We tried it all on ourselves first to see if we wouldn't kill the models. Actually it wasn't too bad.

**Janet:** Oh, good, good. I'm glad to hear that.

**Dorothee:** And then we thought, oh, well then the curling iron, maybe that's not too bad either. We survived all the other things too.

**Janet:** What type of tool do you use? Did you have somebody make you a reproduction curling iron?

**Dorothee:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Cool, did you put a wood handle on it or anything or how did you decide to do that?

**Dorothee:** Yeah, we had a wooden handle, because we didn't really know what it looked like. We read a lot of literature and we still didn't know. So we made it like an iron pin, a bit tapered at the end and then a wooden handle.

**Janet:** Well done. I've used a ring mandrel before trying to do that, like a metal ring sizer that has a wooden handle, and that works pretty well, but the metal is so heavy that it takes a really long time to heat up. And once it's hot, if it's too hot, then it's dangerous after that point. But that shape works really well. In fact, are you familiar with that funerary stele in, again, it's in the Uffizi? I think it's to P. Ferrarius Hermes and his wife. Her side of this stele has what looks to be a curling iron as one of the intaglio images.

**Dorothee:** I don't think I know it.

**Phoebe:** It's very cool that you can actually see a curling iron.

**Janet:** Well, we're not sure it is a curling iron, but it is I think the best analog and it's been sitting there forever. We don't even know if artefact curling irons have existed because they could be mistaken for other tools. A curling iron without a wooden handle could be mistaken for a tent stake for all that, or a spearhead probably. And too, metal being so prized, anything that wasn't in active use, I'm sure went to the melter and got turned into something else.

**Dorothee:** Or it has just rusted away...

**Janet:** Yeah, presuming it was iron. I would expect these tools to be from bronze, but iron is not at all a bad idea.

**Phoebe:** It's an interesting point.

**Dorothee:** It's one of the big mysteries of Roman hairdressing.

**Janet:** We know they did it. We have no idea with what.

**Phoebe:** Well, I hope you manage to solve it. I'm thinking about wrapping up. So thank you both for that interesting discussion. As a final question, before we finish up, what are your plans for the future and how can the EXARC community help to make a difference in regards to the points that you've discussed today?

**Dorothee:** Well, I have a plan for the future because I really want to recreate spuma Batava. You know, the stuff that Germanic people made and actually apparently can bleach your hair. It's a kind of soap, and I'm really curious how it works and how soap can bleach your hair to such an extent that it becomes blond, if it wasn't already. So I'd love to try that.

**Janet:** Read up on soap making, I think there's a lot of medieval and Renaissance soap making manuals and they do discuss how controlling the alkalinity of the soap was difficult. And we know from the Venetians how they used ash water and soap to bleach their own hair. They would apply it to their hair and then go out in the sun. The sunlight accelerates it, but the alkalinity has a lot to do, I think, with the actual bleaching factor. So it may be a reaction with the alkalinity and just free oxygen in the hair, cause the way we do it today is with alkaline solutions like persulfates and ammonia. And then we add peroxide to it, which speeds up the process. So, that would be my guess. But the whole idea of whether it was the pilam matillaca, which would be the soap balls versus liquid one. What was the difference and why did they have two? Would be a question I'd be interested in.

**Dorothee:** You can make hard soap and soft soap if you use different types of alkaline. But I'm just really curious how it works. Did Romans never talk about [sitting in] the sun with it? Just wash your hair with this stuff. As I said, the Germanic people do it and they turned their hair red, which maybe points to a not completely bleached brown hair.

**Janet:** Well, there are two mentions of they say 'reddening' and the 'making yellow' of the hair. In the stages of lightening for natural hair, the colors appear depending on how dark you start. So if the hair is dark, you're going to get red tones first. If the hair is already naturally light you're going to get more orangy and yellow tones first. So it may just be differences of observation of the type of hair the person started with, but the commentator just doesn't have that pre-existing knowledge.

**Dorothee:** And I think it will be so much fun to send out an email to all the archaeologists in The Netherlands: who wants to donate their hair for an experiment?

**Janet:** Absolutely, absolutely! Hair samples, my favorite.

**Dorothee:** Yeah, so that's one of the plans. I hope to do that maybe next year after I've practiced more with making soap because I've already done it, but I need more practice. The description says the best spuma Batava comes from... what was it?

**Janet:** Goat fat and beech ash.

**Dorothee:** So I need to get goat fat and beech ash and make my own alkaline and then make soap really the old fashioned way and not the modern way with all the chemicals you can just buy.

**Phoebe:** And Janet, do you have any plans for the future?

**Janet:** I'm working on a photographic manual of ancient hairdressing that I hope to kick along soon. I've got about three empresses in the can and I need to do about a dozen more. So stay tuned.

**Dorothee:** Wow, will you make a book out of them?

**Janet:** That's what I'd like to do. Probably, I'm hoping just a picture book where you don't even have to necessarily have text involved to see what's doing. It might even make an interesting flip book when you just see them happen in real time. But you know, the problem with video is that it's at the pleasure of the platform companies. So should YouTube go bust or decide to do 'the big digital blackout' or 'digital Dark Ages' the video could easily be lost and you know, I'm getting on, I'm 63. So at some point who is going to be the steward of the channel? If I continue to make a lot more videos, this stuff starts to get complicated, but I always feel like if it's hard copy, it lasts.

**Phoebe:** I'll be picking up a copy I reckon. So, thank you very much both of you, Janet and Dorothee for joining us today and thank you so much for sharing your experience and expertise. I know that I learned a lot for sure and that I'm sure our listeners will too.

**Janet:** Thank you, it was a pleasure.

**Dorothee:** Thank you, yeah, it was good fun.

**Phoebe:** And thank you to everyone else for listening to this episode of #FinallyFriday by EXARC. If you would like to become more involved with EXARC, why not become a member? Alternatively, you can make a small PayPal donation through the website to help support EXARC in its endeavors.