This 5-year Discovery Project (2010-2014) to Zenobia Jacobs has been funded by the Australian Research Council to establish the timing of major turning points in the behaviour of *Homo sapiens* in Africa and Neanderthals in France between 160,000 and 50,000 years ago. Some researchers consider that Neanderthal behaviour embraced the full range of ‘modern’ technology, subsistence and symbolism, whereas others argue that significant differences in behaviour existed between the two species. So the fundamental question remains: did *Homo sapiens* have superior and more complex behaviour than that of other species — giving us a competitive advantage — or did something else lead to the demise of the Neanderthals?

In this project, Zenobia aims to provide a firm chronological foundation to answer this question. Her main objective is to provide a reliable timeframe for investigating the similarities and differences between the behavioural patterns of Neanderthals in France and early *Homo sapiens* in Morocco, Libya and southern Africa at a time when — and in localities where — they are known to have not interacted. This will inform us about when, where and perhaps why significant changes occurred in the behaviour of these two species. The data acquired in France will be compared to the data acquired from *Homo sapiens* sites in Morocco and in South Africa.

Zenobia is collaborating with archaeologists working in all three regions to provide answers to some of these fundamental questions.

**Main collaborators**

- Graeme Barker, McDonald Institute, University of Cambridge, UK
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- Curtis Marean, Institute of Human Origins, Arizona State University, USA
- Shannon McPherron, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany
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- Marie Soressi, Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Preventives (INRAP), France
Key publications


Clockwise from top left: Excavations at Smugglers’ Cave in Morocco; an Aterian stemmed artefact from Morocco; The Neanderthal statue overlooking the Dordogne valley in Les Eysies, France; Excavations at Les Cottés, France.