



Archaeology **Now**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA - HOUSTON SOCIETY

The past has never been more present

Dr. Rosemary Joyce

GENDER IN PREHISPANIC MESOAMERICA



She will be speaking at UH on Monday, Feb 4 at noon – 12:50 pm, 116 M. Sponsored by the Anthropology Program & AIA Houston.

One of the central challenges for historicizing gender is the perceived difficulty of understanding lived experience and cultural interpretations in the absence of either first-hand testimony or, at the very least, written documents. Yet accepting this limitation would make it impossible to include a very large part of the historical societies of the world in gender studies, and notably, would eliminate many traditionally marginalized peoples from discussion if they did not leave written documents. The outcome of this challenge was, for a long time, a kind of unreflective projection into the past of modern attitudes, something that served to naturalize binaries of sex and normative sexuality. The more recent history of exploration of gender in the past by archaeologists has changed this, by introducing ways to interpret material traces as products of, and means to shape, ancient experiences of embodied personhood. This has been most richly developed in a few cases, such as the study of the pre-Hispanic history of Mexico and Central America, where urban settlements produced evidence of everyday life, politics, trade, religion, and expressive culture. Approached using concepts derived from queer theory and gender studies, these societies now serve as powerful models for ways to avoid normative interpretation and be attentive to evidence of lives lived other ways

Rosemary A. Joyce is an internationally renowned expert on gender, sexuality, and the body; on how the use of alcoholic beverages as social lubricants provided the surprising stimulus to develop chocolate; and on how archaeologists can rethink social life by attending more carefully to the most common intersection archaeologists have with people in the past: their death and burial. She is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, was a Fulbright Senior Scholar, and has received numerous other awards for her scholarship. Professor Joyce received her A.B. in Anthropology and Archeology from Cornell University in 1978 and her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois-Urbana in 1985. She has taught and lectured around the world, and is the author or editor of fifteen books including *The Oxford Handbook of Archeology*, *Ancient Bodies*, *Ancient Lives*, *The Languages of Archaeology*; and *Material Relations*.