

Michel Brunet, born in 1940 in Poitou, South-West France, studied Life Sciences at the University of Paris Sorbonne and there received his Ph.D. in paleontology in 1966. Then he went to the University of Poitiers, completed his Natural Sciences State doctorate in 1975 and became a tenured professor of paleontology in 1989. From 1976 on, his field researches, always in hostile sites, concentrated on hominid paleontology in Afghanistan and Iraq.



*Michel Brunet digging in the Djurab Desert*

Owing to the dangerous political situation in both countries, Michel Brunet turned his attention to Africa where he decided to explore western Africa for ape and hominid fossils. His first field surveys took place in Cameroon 1984 and in the Lake Chad basin, the Djurab Desert, in 1993. In 1995 he described a new hominid dated to 3,5 mill. years, the first Australopithecus known west of the Rift Valley. In 2002 he published the first hominid yet found (7 mill. years). More recently, he also led field surveys for fossil mammals and primates in North Africa.

Michel Brunet is currently Professor of the Collège de France, Chaire de Paléontologie humaine, in Paris. He received a large number of Honors, among them: Chevalier dans l'Ordre de la Légion d'honneur, Philip Morris Scientific Prize 1996, and is 2003 Laureate of the Dan David Prize.

## Einstein Lectures Dahlem

Mit den 'Einstein Lectures Dahlem' würdigt die Freie Universität Berlin unter Beteiligung außeruniversitärer Forschungseinrichtungen das epochale Wirken Albert Einsteins über nahezu zwei Jahrzehnte in Berlin als Direktor des Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituts für Physik mit einem hochkarätigen, interdisziplinär ausgerichteten Universitäts-Colloquium am traditionellen Wissenschaftsstandort Berlin-Dahlem. Die 'Einstein Lectures Dahlem', die einmal pro Semester stattfinden und eine breite Universitätsöffentlichkeit ansprechen, umfassen alle Wissenschaftsgebiete, die durch Albert Einsteins Denken beeinflusst werden.

Gestaltung: uniform-berlin.de

## Einstein Lectures Dahlem

## Einladung

**Freitag, 6. November 2009**  
**17.00 Uhr s.t.**



# Einstein Lectures

## Dahlem

der Freien Universität Berlin



### Zehnte Einstein Lecture Dahlem

#### **Prof. Dr. Michel Brunet**

Dan-David-Preisträger für  
Paläoanthropologie 2003  
Collège de France, Paris  
Chaire de Paléontologie humaine

**Freitag, 6. November 2009**  
**17.00 Uhr s.t.**

HS 1A, Rost-/Silberlaube

Habelschwerdter Allee 45  
14195 Berlin

Es wird gebeten, die Plätze bis  
16.55 Uhr einzunehmen.

#### Musikalischer Auftakt

##### **Grußwort**

*Prof. Dr. Ing. Jochen Schiller*  
*Vizepräsident der Freien Universität Berlin*

##### **Einführung**

*Prof. Dr. Jörg Eichler*

#### Musikalisches Zwischenspiel

##### **In search of the cradle of mankind**

*Prof. Dr. Michel Brunet*

##### **mit anschließender Diskussion**

*moderiert von Prof. Dr. Helmut Keupp*

#### Musikalischer Ausklang

Es spielen:

*Ensemble Farou Berlin*  
*des Deutschen Symphonie-Orchesters Berlin*

*Isabel Mayer, Oboe*  
*Georg Arzberger, Klarinette*  
*Markus Kneisel, Fagott*

#### **Abstract**

The idea of the origin of mankind arose quite recently, about 150 years ago, from Charles Darwin's revolutionary theory of the origin of species. In the following decades, predecessors of present humans have been found in various parts of the Old World, and in the 1980s, the earliest bipedal hominids have been identified in the Rift Valley in East Africa in a presumed savanna environment.

Later diggings, from 1994 onwards, have unearthed much older species far West of the Rift Valley and were dated as 3.5 million years old. However, the spectacular discovery by the present author's team of the earliest hominid yet found, Sahelanthropus Tchadensis (nicknamed Toumai), was made in 2002 in the Djurab desert (Northern Chad) and is dated as about 7 million years old. This species displays a unique combination of primitive and modern features showing that it is not related to the chimpanzees or gorillas but clearly resembles later hominids and seems temporally close to the last common ancestor of chimpanzees and humans. The talk will also discuss the probable habitat of the Toumai with its implications and finally will proceed to the further development and spread of our ancestors through Asia and Europe in the course of time. Much of this information is derived from modern methods of genetics.

