

## The Abydos Middle Cemetery Project Enters Its Fifteenth Year

University of Michigan teams, with the gracious consent of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt, have worked at Abydos for fourteen years now. As of 2008 we had conducted four survey seasons and three full-scale excavation seasons, accumulating a great deal of ceramic, skeletal, and artifactual material as study collections at the dig house.

Confronting this mass of material in a systematic way was an important component of our fourth excavation season at Abydos in February–March 2009. We not only continued our excavations and magnetometric work in the Middle Cemetery, but thanks to a grant from the Antiquities Endowment Fund of the American Research Center in Egypt, our Kelsey conservators also launched a survey of previously excavated material stored at the Pennsylvania–Yale–Institute of Fine Arts/New York University house used by a consortium of North American projects of which the U-M mission is a member (fig. 1). The survey methodology and database were jointly developed



Fig. 1. The Pennsylvania–Yale–Institute of Fine Arts/New York University expedition house compound in the desert at Abydos.

by Suzanne Davis and Claudia Chemello; this first round in the field was staffed by Claudia Chemello. Claudia was without doubt one of the busiest crew members on the ground this year: alongside her work on the database she was also continually engaged in field conservation, stabilizing fragile contexts in the Middle Cemetery including an undisturbed but badly deteriorated statue deposit (*serdab*)

and the remains of a painted chapel, both of the late Old Kingdom; and in cleaning and stabilizing smaller artifacts excavated during the season. Thanks to her tireless efforts we successfully excavated one of the earliest serdabs known from Abydos and also made great strides toward organizing the results of now eight seasons of work.

Janet Richards

## Conservation at Abydos

As in previous seasons, ongoing conservation goals focused on the preservation of specific important finds excavated during the season (fig. 2). Major finds included two painted limestone walls in situ, as well as a sealed serdab deposit containing numerous painted wooden statues, along with plaster and textile elements (fig. 3).

A new and crucial goal for conservation in the 2009 field season was the implementation of a conservation condition survey of Abydos Middle Cemetery (AMC) excavated artifacts. Although important finds from the project are registered with the Supreme Council of Antiquities and transported to a central

storage facility in the local province, all other finds from this excavation are stored on site, at the dig house.

The goal of the survey is to investi-

gate artifact condition and to recommend storage improvements for artifacts that are stored at the dig house. The survey, designed and built by the author

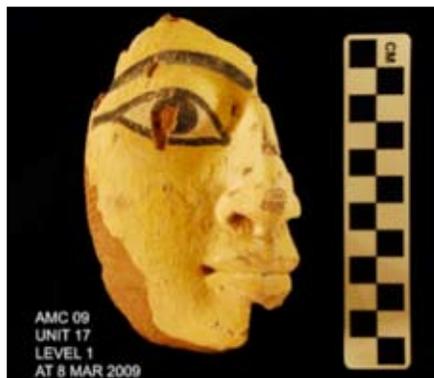


Fig. 2. Painted wood coffin fragment, after treatment (left) and packed in a custom-fitted container (right).

## Notes from the Director

Last week, at the Associate's Spring Event, as I was listening to John Pedley's splendid talk on the achievements of Francis Kelsey, I was struck once again by the foresight and expansiveness of Professor Kelsey's educational vision. This nineteenth-century "man of many parts" was himself inspired by all aspects of classical antiquity and sought to pass that inspiration on to generations of Michigan students and citizens, not only through texts, most notably his edition of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, but also by providing hands-on experience with ancient artifacts. Although the Museum only took on Kelsey's name years after his death, he was directly responsible, through insightful purchases and well-chosen excavations, for over 50 percent of the Museum's current holdings.

Today, as we prepare to install many of Kelsey's never-before-displayed acquisitions in the new Upjohn Exhibit Wing and carry on ambitious programs of field and collections research, we are building on and expanding Kelsey's vision with twenty-first-century tools and questions. Were Kelsey miraculously resurrected for the November 1 opening of the Upjohn Wing, he would see much that was familiar but also many surprises. I think he would be pleased.

Sharon Herbert  
Director

be set at levels low enough to protect the watercolor pigments.

On the object conservation front, Claudia Chemello and I applied to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for financial assistance, and in the spring of 2008 we received a Conservation Project Support Grant from IMLS, which is providing funds for conservation and mounting of the watercolors, along with an educational component that will explain the unique history of the paintings as well as their conservation.

How did we solve all the mounting and conservation issues for the watercolors? Thanks to our IMLS grant, we were able to send the watercolors to the Intermuseum Conservation Association in Cleveland, Ohio. There, conservators who specialize in paintings and works of art on paper are hard at work flattening, repairing, and mounting the watercolors. Wendy Partridge is the lead paintings conservator on the project, while Jamye Jamison is the paper specialist. Together, they've been able to merge the disciplines of paintings and paper conservation to develop an innovative treatment and mounting plan for the watercolors.

To help us protect the Barosso watercolors long-term, Dr. Paul Whitmore, of the Art Conservation Research Center at Carnegie Mellon University, tested the paintings for light sensitivity using a special micro-fading technique. His research revealed that the red colors are extremely light-sensitive. This work will assist us greatly in designing exhibition and other visitor programs for the watercolors. For example, his research will

inform the lighting protocols used in the Barosso room.

Overall, this project has proved to be a fascinating exercise in collaborative problem solving across multiple disciplines: conservation, architecture and design, museum curation and education. I know that all of us look forward to the day when we can see the result of our labors—the Barosso watercolors, beautifully and safely installed in their new home at the Kelsey Museum.

Suzanne Davis

## Conserving Maria Barosso's Watercolors

When we first began planning for the Upjohn Wing, one treasure in our collection was discussed over and over again: the Barosso watercolors. These twenty-two watercolors are arguably one of the rarest and most beautiful "objects" in the Museum's collection. Commissioned by Francis Kelsey and painted by the highly regarded Italian artist, archaeologist, and archaeological illustrator Maria Barosso, the nearly life-size paintings depict the famous fresco cycle at the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. They were painted between 1925 and 1927.

Because the watercolors are so large (up to 20 feet long), they've been exhibited only once since they arrived in Ann Arbor in the 1920s. Everyone agreed that this sad fact should be remedied in our new wing, but how? Not only are the paintings huge; they'd been rolled up for most of the past seventy years, and the thick, canvas-backed paper was warped. Some paintings were torn, others were dirty. Plus, watercolor pigments are notoriously light-sensitive, making long-term exhibition virtually impossible.

Assuming these obstacles could be overcome, how would we mount them? The Barosso watercolors are an unusual hybrid: oversize works of art on paper that is backed with canvas. Not quite paintings on canvas, they're also not quite works of art on paper. Traditional framing wasn't a good option. The cura-

tor for these paintings, Elaine Gazda, wanted visitors to have the experience Kelsey originally intended—of walking into a space that looked and felt like the room at the Villa in Pompeii.

We approached these various challenges from two directions: exhibit design and object conservation. Working with architects, engineers, and exhibit designers, we created a special room for the paintings. Located on the second floor of the Upjohn Wing, the room is sized specifically for the watercolors, with motion-activated lighting that can



Intermuseum Conservation Association (ICA) and Kelsey Museum staff discuss treatment of one of the watercolor panels. Pictured are (left to right): Jamye Jamison (ICA), 05 (ICA), Suzanne Davis (Kelsey), Claudia Chemello (Kelsey), Wendy Partridge (ICA), and Scott Meier (Kelsey).

continued from page 1

and Suzanne Davis, conservators for the AMC project, utilizes a Criterion Anchored Rating Scale (CARS) to quickly assess the condition of each object. The survey has a rating scale of 1 to 5 for condition, based on a visual examination of each object. Various check boxes indicate the current housing of the artifact and whether the object requires improved storage to prevent deterioration and/or loss. The survey records what materials are recommended to provide improved storage in order to calculate the quantity of materials required and to facilitate the future purchase of supplies for rehousing (fig. 4).

During the 2009 season, a total of 357 artifacts were surveyed (fig. 5). Of these, the vast majority require rehousing in future seasons. Most need rehousing in smaller, rigid, lidded containers to protect fragile material. These small containers, available locally, can be placed back into the large wood storage boxes that already house this material. All of the objects that are currently housed in open wood or plastic trays, or on wooden boards, should be rehoused into rigid containers and then into lidded wood boxes. Wood boxes are available locally and can be made to order for any size required.

A very strong recommendation that emerged from the conservation survey is that a unique number should be assigned to each artifact (currently linked to individual excavation seasons only) and that a database be used to organize and formally record all



Fig. 5. Claudia Chemello at work in one of the Abydos storerooms.



Fig. 3. Kelsey Conservator Claudia Chemello excavates the late Old Kingdom serdab deposit.

excavation information associated with that artifact. It is hoped that, when this database is developed, it will be possible to integrate it with the existing conservation survey and treatment database, both of which run in FileMaker.

Conservation priorities for future seasons in the Middle Cemetery will naturally continue to be architectural features and excavated finds for the current season. A further high priority is conservation of the lifted objects from the serdab excavated this season. This

material was consolidated with cyclododecane, a temporary treatment method, and requires further treatment and secure, custom housing for long-term storage and access.

Finally, it is essential that we continue the conservation survey initiated this year. The survey has identified a large number of objects that require rehousing for support and long-term preservation. Priority should be given to the most fragile materials during the rehousing, particularly arti-

facts made from textile, cartonnage, and unfired clay. Such careful management of excavated artifacts not only ensures their long-term viability but also renders them more readily accessible to study by interested scholars.

Claudia Chemello

For more information on conservation activities at Abydos and other excavation projects, visit the Kelsey conservators' blog at <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/kelsey-museum.digdiary/>.

ABYDOS MIDDLE CEMETERY PROJECT CONSERVATION CONDITION SURVEY					
AMC Inventory #	AMC 07-01	Storage Location		Date	Feb 27, 2009
Object Type	architectural fragment	Inscribed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Surveyor	Claudia Chemello
Primary material	stone: limestone	Storage Housing Needed	No	Storage Housing Completed	
Secondary material		ziplock bag	<input type="checkbox"/>	polyurethane foam	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Materials	possibly pigment, difficult to see	tupperware container	<input type="checkbox"/>	ethafoam	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition Ranking	4	muslin bag	<input type="checkbox"/>	volara	<input type="checkbox"/>
Object/Condition Notes	carved hieroglyphs on one side	wooden box	<input type="checkbox"/>	soft tyvek	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage Housing at Time of Survey	zip lock bag <input type="checkbox"/>	plastic container, no lid	<input type="checkbox"/>	hard tyvek	<input type="checkbox"/>
no housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	open shelf	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	tissue interleave	<input type="checkbox"/>
	wood box <input type="checkbox"/>	wood pallet	<input type="checkbox"/>	tissue padding	<input type="checkbox"/>
	basket <input type="checkbox"/>	cotton sheet cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	twill tape	<input type="checkbox"/>
	wood tray <input type="checkbox"/>	tyvek cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	muslin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	plastic container, lid	other, see notes at right	<input type="checkbox"/>	see notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage Notes & Measurements		Housed on open wooden shelving. H - 50cm, W - 28cm, D - 16cm			
<b>Condition Ranking 1:</b> High priority for treatment; actively deteriorating. <b>This may include:</b> • major structural problems • mold/mildew • active corrosion on more than 25% of surface • flaking/lifting/powdering/spalling or friable surface, more than 25% • active tearing/breaking • major insect damage/ live bugs	<b>Condition Ranking 2:</b> Needs remedial treatment; condition may worsen quickly over time. <b>This may include:</b> • active corrosion less than 25% of surface • broken due to failed adhesive • old restorations/failing restorations • deteriorated coatings • flaking/lifting/powdering/spalling or friable surface, less than 25% • needs new housing	<b>Condition Ranking 3:</b> May benefit from or require treatment to improve appearance; condition is stable with little potential for active deterioration. <b>This may include:</b> • accretions • dirt • dust • losses • old restorations	<b>Condition Ranking 4:</b> No treatment necessary; condition is stable.	<b>Condition Ranking 5:</b> No treatment is possible; deterioration is irreversible/irreparable, and/or object is disintegrated/unsalvageable.	

Fig. 4. An example of a FileMaker record from the 2009 conservation survey.

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2009 Pedley Award winner Adela Sobotkova helps record a Thracian storage pit.

## Staff Update

Hellenistic and Roman Curator **Elaine Gazda** lectured at seven campuses as a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar and will visit an eighth campus in the fall. She chaired a session, *The Romans on Display: Rethinking the Ancient and Modern Museum*, at the Roman Archaeology Conference in Ann Arbor in early April and gave a paper entitled “(Re)Creating Contexts: Displaying the Romans in the New Kelsey Museum.” She will go to Rome in late May/early June to do research for two projects and to attend the Trustees’ meetings of the American Academy in Rome. She continues to co-chair the Trustees’ Publications Committee and this year served on two Academy search committees. Her three-year term as director of IPCAA ends on June 30, and she will work on the installation of the Upjohn Wing all summer.

Curator for Dynastic Egypt **Janet Richards**, with the help of Kelsey Editor **Peg Lourie**, published a second edition of her coedited book, *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt: Essays in Honor of David B. O’Connor*. She also directed

a two-month field season in the Abydos Middle Cemetery, southern Egypt, in winter 2009, and continues working on the Dynastic Egyptian component of the Kelsey’s Upjohn Wing installation.

Curator for Greece and the Near East **Margaret Root** spoke at a conference on kingship in Cambridge, UK, and gave a scholarly paper on Achaemenid Persian architecture at the College Art Association in Los Angeles. She also lectured at Trent University in Canada and at the Toledo Museum of Art. She published two articles: “Reading Persepolis in Greek Part Two: Marriage Metaphors and Unmanly Virtues,” in *Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran: Cross-Cultural Encounters*, ed. S. M. R. Darbandi and A. Zournatzi; and “The Legible Image: How Did Seals and Sealing Matter in Persepolis?” in *Archives des fortifications de Persépolis: État des questions et perspectives de recherches*, ed. P. Briant, W. F. M. Henkelman, and M. W. Stolper. She hopes to lead another Archaeological Institute of America tour of Iran in April 2010.

Graphic Artist/Gifts Manager **Lorene Sterner** continues to prepare the next Tel Anafa volume for publication, in print



## Pedley Award Winner

The Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology (IPCAA) is pleased to announce that Adela Sobotkova is the 2009 recipient of funds from the John Griffiths Pedley Travel and Research Endowment. She will use the funds to continue investigating Thracian social and political structures. As a fellow this year at the American Research Center in Sofia, Adela participated in an archaeological surface survey in the Kazanlak region of central Bulgaria. The valley of Roses surrounding Kazanlak has been nicknamed the valley of Thracian kings because Seuthopolis, the supposed Hellenistic capital of the Odryssians (now submerged under the Koprinka reservoir), is located there, encircled by hundreds of burial mounds. The density of monuments suggests the Kazanlak valley as the potential core of the Odryssian kingdom, but little is known about settlement patterns beyond Seuthopolis. Study of the archaeological landscape along with interdisciplinary investigations in the hinterland of Seuthopolis and elsewhere in the Tundzha river valley should reveal whether this postulate is true and, if so, shed light on what underpinned this power base.

## IPCAA Kudos

**James Cook** spent three months in Egypt last fall continuing his dissertation research on canals near Karanis, as a member of the UCLA/RUG Fayum Project. He coauthored “The Coarsewares,” in A. Martin et al., “A Third-Century Context from S. Stefano Rotondo (Rome)” in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*. He gave papers at the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) meetings on “Rewriting the Nile: Egyptian Tradition and the Formation of a Ptolemaic Dynastic Program,” and at the American Research Center in Egypt meetings on “The Graeco-Roman Canals of the Fayum: An Archaeological Investigation.” He will participate as a ceramicist in the Pompeii Archaeological Research Project: Porta Stabia and next fall will teach a course at U-M on ancient technology.

**Emily Holt** will spend May and June working on the excavation in Sardinia that she set up while on her Italian Fulbright, which is called Progetto Pran’e Siddi. She then will return to work for the Pompeii Archaeological Research Project: Porta Stabia for her fourth season as the project’s environmental archaeologist.

**Leah Long** presented two papers: “The

and eventually on a Web site. She is also working to make all of the documents and photos from fieldwork at Kedesh available via the Internet.

This summer Academic Outreach Curator **Lauren Talalay** will co-present, with Tracey Cullen and Zarko Tankosic, “Times of Transition: Final Neolithic through Late Bronze Age in Southern Euboea” at Euboea and Athens: A Colloquium in Memory of Malcolm B. Wallace and “The Prehistory of Southern Euboea: Recent Investigation of Southern Euboea” at ΣΤΥΡΙΑ ΓΑΙΑ: The Archaeology of Styra and Southern Euboea. She also presented “Rethinking Double Images in the Prehistoric Mediterranean” with Tracey Cullen at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Malta. She published “Deities: Goddesses” in *Encyclopedia of Women in World History*.

Curator for Graeco-Roman Egypt **Terry Wilfong** will be working on his part of the installation of the Upjohn Wing in the summer, with an interlude for teaching Coptic papyrology for the Summer Institute of Papyrology, sponsored by the American Society of Papyrologists.

Marble Industry at Aphrodisias: New Quarries Discovered on the Aphrodisias Regional Survey” at the Association for the Study of Marbles and Other Stones in Antiquity in Terragona, Spain, in June 2009; and “Marble and Other Geologic Resources of the Region around Aphrodisias” at the AIA meetings in Philadelphia in January 2009.

**Alex Nagel** has won a Carter Manny Award special recognition from the Graham Foundation, Chicago; a Graduate Student Travel Award from the American Oriental Society; a Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship; and a Freer fellowship to work at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, for 2009–2010. During this academic year he presented papers in London, Philadelphia, Oxford, and Greece. In the fall he conducted research in Tehran, Persepolis, and Susa in Iran. Later he continued to work on stone sculptures from Persepolis in Berlin and at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. For summer 2009 he is organizing “The Color of Things—Debating the Role and Future of Color in Archaeology” for the meeting of the Theoretical Archaeology Group at Stanford and will present papers in London, Edinburgh, and Cambridge. In addition he is preparing for another fieldwork season at Persepolis.

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Sunday afternoon  
November 1, 2009

Grand Opening of the  
Upjohn Exhibit Wing



## Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

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Elaine K. Gazda, *Hellenistic and Roman*  
Sharon Herbert, *Greek and Hellenistic*  
Janet Richards, *Dynastic Egypt*  
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*The spectacular Saite Period (685–525 BC) coffin of Djheutymose, partially shown at left, will be among the Kelsey treasures on display in the new Upjohn Exhibit Wing starting in November 2009.*

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