NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Margaret Cool Root, Curator of Near Eastern and Greek collections and Professor of the History of Art, retired this summer after 77 years of service to the University of Michigan—but not before launching one more Kelsey exhibition, *Passionate Curator: Collecting in Egypt & the Near East 1889–1950*, on display through November 19. I would like to devote my columns in this Newsletter to a brief glance back at Margaret's distinguished career as a scholar, teacher, and museum curator.

Margaret is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College (BA 1966, PhD 1976). After one year of teaching at the University of Chicago, she joined the faculty of the University of Michigan in 1978. In addition to her contributions as Professor and Curator, she served as Acting Director of the Kelsey in 1991–1993 and 2004–2005, and as Chair of the Department of the History of Art from 1994 to 1999. As a scholar, Margaret is the rare colleague whose oeuvre includes both strikingly original research and sustained archival study. I first encountered her through her seminal first book, *The King and Kingship in Akhenatenid Art* (1970). I well remember reading and discussing it with passionate interest as a graduate student in Berkeley in the mid-1980s. Margaret's other publications include more than 15 additional books and exhibition catalogues, as well as more than 50 articles and book chapters.

Margaret's archival research blends with her teaching in her collaboration with Mark Garrison (IPCAA PhD, 1988), her former student, on the publication of the *Persepolis fortification tablets*. The first volume of what one reviewer described as “this enormous undertaking” appeared in 2001, and the other two volumes are eagerly awaited. Mark and many others form a loyal cadre of Margaret’s former students who have made significant contributions to Classical and Near Eastern archaeology and to American cultural life.

For Margaret as for the other curators at the Kelsey Museum, teaching and research come together in their work as stewards of the Museum’s permanent collections, and especially in the special exhibitions they regularly mount. In Margaret’s case, these include exhibitions and exhibition catalogues not only on seeds and other subjects in which she has special expertise but also in areas in which she has special expertise. Roman glass, and the U-M excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in Iraq. Her current exhibition, *Passionate Curator*, provides visitors with the opportunity to meet a number of the collectors who helped to make the Kelsey what it is—represented in the galleries by pedestals containing photographs, documents, and fictional first-person narratives created by Margaret Root. Also on display is a selection of the artifacts that these collectors donated to the Kelsey. The exhibition developed out of a collaborative book project by Margaret Root and Laurie Taheny, former Associate Director of the Kelsey, which recounts the stories of collectors and collecting at the Kelsey from the late 19th century until the present and discusses how attitudes toward collecting have changed over that time. Laurie retired from the Museum in 2013, and it is a remarkable act of academic generosity on the part of both Margaret and Laurie to leave their younger colleagues and the public at large with this marvelous compendium of insider knowledge about the history of the museum and its collections.

One of the very successful aspects of the current exhibition is how clearly it evokes Margaret’s intellectual personality. Those of us who know Margaret recognize this innumerable combination of bookish, scholarly, and quizzical inclinations. Readers who do not know Margaret will surely come away with a strong sense of a very distinctive intellectual presence—of a passionate and curious mind.

Christopher Ratti, Director

*NEW* ARCHIVAL FILM FOOTAGE FROM KARANIS

The silent movies from the University of Michigan 1924–1935 Expedition to Egypt continue to yield surprises: a new digitization of this vintage film uncovered an entire reel of uncatalogued footage, with new details from the excavations. At least four hours of silent film were shot by the Michigan crew in Egypt between 1918 and 1935, under the direction of photographer George Swain. There was clearly some kind of plan to turn this footage into a documentary, but the movie never came together, and the footage was simply unreviewed for decades. In preparation for Elaine Gazda’s landmark 1987 exhibition on Karanis, the silent film was transferred to video, from which a short collection of excerpts was made, along with a detailed log of the film’s contents. Most of what we knew about the films came from the videos and their log.

For my 2011–2012 Kelsey Research exhibition, *Karanis Revealed*, the Kelsey’s Museum Collections Manager Sebastian Escavia supervised the digitization of the video masters, from which I cut the films into clips based on the old logs. Some of the clips were used on iPads in the exhibition and also feature on the exhibition website. In preparing clips for the exhibition, I researched both the films and their context, thanks to John Pedley’s biography of Francis Kelsey. I got a sense of Kelsey’s engagement with contemporary film culture and arrived at an idea of what the intentions might have been behind these films. I presented my ideas in a lecture for the Francis Kelsey exhibition, later excerpted for an article in the *Karanis Revealed* book.

The quality of the digitized video was never great, and Sebastian went back to the films themselves for a new digitization project. The resulting digital files are much sharper and clearer, yielding higher resolution than the old video transfers. Even better, the files also reveal a “lost” reel of footage—nearly an hour of film not previously transferred to video or catalogued. Highlights from the “new” reel include more scenes of the Michigan crew in their camp, as well as travel to Medinet el-Fayyum, the modern capital of the region, and scenes of village life. In one sequence, the American Minister visits Cairo, leaving from the dig house with great ceremony. In another, the crew watch the Egyptian workers as they held a celebration in the courtyard of the dig house—although it seems at least partly staged for the camera, we do get to see many of the workers we know from archival still photographs and expedition records.

But the greatest surprises of the new footage center on ancient scenes. A relatively brief sequence shows the nearby Fayum site of Philadelphia—a Graeco-Roman town excavated by a German team in the 1930s—and gives a sense of the amount of surviving standing architecture from this orthogonally laid-out community.

Most of general interest to us at Michigan is footage from the Kelsey Museum’s work there. The views of Dimé, another Graeco-Roman townsite that Michigan excavated in 1924–1935, are more than fascinating. The film footage never great, and Sebastián went back to the films themselves for a new digitization project. The resulting digital files are much sharper and clearer, yielding higher resolution than the old video transfers. Even better, the files also reveal a “lost” reel of footage—nearly an hour of film not previously transferred to video or catalogued. Highlights from the “new” reel include more scenes of the Michigan crew in their camp, as well as travel to Medinet el-Fayyum, the modern capital of the region, and scenes of village life. In one sequence, the American Minister visits Cairo, leaving from the dig house with great ceremony. In another, the crew watch the Egyptian workers as they held a celebration in the courtyard of the dig house—although it seems at least partly staged for the camera, we do get to see many of the workers we know from archival still photographs and expedition records.

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Of greater interest to us at Michigan is footage from the 1935 Michigan excavation of the cemetery site of Teneptosith (modern Korn Abou Bissala) (fig. 1). Although a relatively uninformative sequence from the site was already known, the new footage shows some extraordinary scenes: the discovery of a late Roman burial, with a body encased in plaster, and footage of the earlier mudbrick structures from which the famous Teneptosith stela were recovered. Perhaps even more intriguing was the discovery of two sequences shot at Dimé, another Graeco-Roman townsite that Michigan excavated in 1924–1935, as an adjunct to the Karanis excavation (fig. 2). The new Dimé footage seems to predate the excavation, perhaps shot in the leadup to Michigan’s work there. The views of Dimé, including sweeping pans of the temple there, are strongly reminiscent of the panoramic still photographs of the site taken by Swain.

The overall quality of the new digitization is greater than splendid; the digitized video from Michigan is currently in the process of cutting the huge video files into manageable clips that will be made freely available online. I had hoped to get through this quickly and post the results, but this task has proven much more complicated than I had imagined. It is not simply a matter of cutting up files because the fragments of all the films are scattered across the reels.

To give a simple example, there is a title “Surveying” in a red III, but the foot- age that follows this title shows camel and has nothing to do with surveying. Readex begins with a title “The Seabird Diggers” but is immediately followed by a brief sequence showing the archaeologists using surveying techniques for mapping a building. Thus the result- ing “Surveying” sequence needs to be reconstructed from the two reels. Other sequences are spread over more reels, and odd snippets appear throughout the reels. I’m using the original titling as much as possible to respect the original intentions behind the film, but it’s a complicated process to match related footage.

T. G. Wilfong, Curator
In February 2016, the Kelsey will open the largest show in its nearly ninety-year history. Entitled Leisure and Luxury in the Age of Nero: The Villas of Oplontis near Pompeii, this international loan exhibition will highlight two spectacular Roman archaeological sites—one an enormous luxury villa (‘Villa A’) that once sprawled along the coast of the Bay of Naples just two miles from Pompeii (fig. 1), the other a nearby commercial-residential complex (‘Villa B’) where products from the region were exported in quantity.

A gallery devoted to “Leisure and Luxury” will showcase a selection of extraordinary works of art—marble sculptures, wall paintings, and metal and glass objects—that created an opulent setting for the owners of Villa A and the many guests they entertained. In contrast, humble objects of daily life—planting pots, mortar and pestle, and oil lamps—will provide a glimpse of the lives of the slaves whose work made possible the owner’s elite lifestyle.

A second gallery, devoted to “Commerce and Wealth,” will evoke both the commercial and domestic life of Villa B. Here the lucrative trade in wine and other products is represented by shipping jars shown alongside a large, heavily ornamented strong box where proceeds of trade were most likely kept (fig. 2). A display of common but elegant domestic objects—bronze, glass, and pottery vessels—will hint at the lives of the “middle-class” residents of Villa B. The tragic end of life there when Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79 takes a toll of the inhabitants, but particularly focuses on one of the fifty-four skeletons found in Villa B (fig. 3), that of a young pregnant woman who was carrying a large quantity of jewelry and coins during her failed attempt to escape. A selection of her gold, silver, and pearl jewelry, along with one of her gold and silver coins, provides a sense of what this woman and others like her regarded as the most valuable portable possessions to take with them in the hope of surviving the eruption.

A third gallery, “Destruction, Discovery, Reconstruction,” will introduce visitors to the history of the excavations, the methods of archaeologists, and the environmental devastation caused by the volcanic eruption. In addition, a computer terminal with a 3D navigable model of Villa A and laser-scanned images of Villa B will allow visitors to relate the objects on exhibit to the archaeologi cal sites—both as they look now and as archaeologists have reconstructed their ancient appearance. For those who want an immersive experience, the model of Villa A will be available on an Oculus Rift headset in the exhibition gallery and, at scheduled times, projected in the MDEN at the U-M D Lab in the Digital Media Commons on North Campus.

This ambitious exhibition has involved me, and many other Kelsey staff members, in a host of new adventures. In 2011, when Professor John R. Clarke, co-director of the Oplontis Project sponsored by the University of Texas in Austin, asked me to organize a show on Oplontis, I did not anticipate that I would literally become part of his archaeological team—both learning from the experts on the team and contributing my own expertise in Roman art and archaeology to the project. But preparing for the exhibition has meant just that. In May, trying to get to know not only the sites, the ongoing discoveries, and the excavated objects. Working side by side, Oplontis Project staff members, specialists, ICPA student Emma Sada (in 2013 and 2014), and I refined the list of objects and created display case mockups in the storage rooms. In 2013, Conservator Carrie Roberts and Exhibitions Coordinator Scott Meier joined me at Oplontis to examine objects for the exhibition (see Carrie Roberts on LIFE page). Meanwhile, John Clarke and I met with our Italian colleagues at the Superintendent’s headquarters in Pompeii to discuss the official and practical arrangements for borrowing the 225 objects on our list.

Among the many exciting moments during the past several years, one was especially thrilling for me. In 2013 a number of major wall painting fragments were hauled out of storage for the first time since the 1970s, when the Italian conservators finished their work. As John catalogued the fragments, registrar Erin Anderson and her helpers spread them out on the storage room floor (fig. 3). We then began to figure out where they had once been in the villa—in which room and on which wall. It was like working with a gigantic jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. Using any straight edge we could get our hands on (broom handles, tape measures, etc.) and aided by a large image of the east wall of room 12, we began moving the fragments into their ancient positions, ultimately determining that they had once belonged to the unexcavated east wall of the room. The resulting reconstruction, greatly enhanced by the U-M’s digital placement of these and other fragments into a mirror-reversed image of the east wall, will be one of the highlights of the exhibition.

Acknowledgments. Thanks are owed to all members of the Kelsey staff, to the donors whose generosity made this exhibition possible, to Prof. John R. Clarke and all members of the Oplontis Project, to many colleagues in the Supercamerale Speciale dei Beni Archeologici di Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, and to our colleagues at the U-M D Lab. Exhibition design and venue: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology; Ann Arbor, Michigan (2014). Exhibition design by David B. Rocke, Bossem, Monmouth (June 1–December 31, 2015). Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts (February 5–August 15, 2015). A fourth US venue is under consideration.

The exhibition is to travel to Artis Ann Arbor, Netherlands (late 2016), the Burrell Collection in Glasgow (2016), and finally to the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, where a number of Oplontis artifacts are held, and included a visit to the conservation studio of Fabiano Terraccia in Rome. In addition to presenting artifacts, the exhibition will reproduce and display many of the unique architectural features preserved at Villa A, including a number of original wall painting fragments, intricately carved marble capitals, and reproduced elaborate stucco moldings from nearby Stabiae, garden-themed wall paintings from room 81, a small bedroom that once looked out onto the Bay of Naples. Scott is working with architect Timothy Liddell to replicate the original moldings with a computer-guided router. Tim will use a 2-axis router to cut the moldings—which have been laser scanned as part of a digital database project that includes blocks of foam. Scott and Tim will construct the room at a slightly reduced scale and reproduce the original moldings, along with printed reproductions of the room’s wall paintings. Other unique elements of Villa A’s wall paintings will be reproduced for the exhibition, including a沙特- stripe design seen on walls at both Villa A and nearby Stabiae, garden-themed wall paintings from room 81, and the sanctum wall painting from room 15, over which nearly 125 fragments of original wall painting will be mounted for exhibit. Villa A’s various sites and museums was a truly unique experience, one that will inform each of the many steps that go into building a museum exhibition. We look forward to presenting a glimpse of this experience, and of the ancient luxury preserved at Oplontis, to a wider audience this February. I would like to thank Elaine for providing us with such an incredible on-site learning experience. We would all like to thank John Clarke and Michael Thomas, directors of the University of Texas Oplontis Project, as well as Antonella Bonini and others of the Superintendent of Pompeii for their help in making this such an enjoyable and fulfilling trip.

Please visit these websites for more information about Leisure and Luxury and the Oplontis Project in general: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/exhibitions/upcomingexhibitions.html. Caroline Roberts, Conservator
Most meters, however, show fewer signs of wear and fragmented into tiny sherds. For instance, Mycenaean Late Bronze Age pottery—such as cleaning, sorting, and labeling the skills of archaeological processing, only instructing field school students in this area during the ensuing Iron Age, as project topographer, documenting the movement of sediment connected with the site. Alongside our excavations, teaching is a crucial component of what we do, training undergraduates in the nuances of archaeological excavation. As a supervisor of the finds lab, I was able to improve my skills in all three of these areas. Practice naturally segued into research. I also conducted some of my own research, studying the textile-making tools that were excavated over the last seven seasons at Gabii. This assemblage is one of the largest from a single city block in central Italy. As part of my research, I was able to record basic measurements, look at use marks on the objects, map their findspots, and work with fellow IPCAA student Matt Naglak to create 3D models of some objects. I was able to share my research with our volunteers during a series of outreach events. My research on these objects will also be presented at the 2016 Archæological Institute of America's Annual Meeting. This was a highly successful season, and I look forward to another great year at Gabii in 2016.

Troy Samuels, IPCAA student
SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

Passionate Curiosities: Collecting in Egypt & the Near East, 1880s–1950s
August 28–November 29, 2015

Rocks, Paper, Memory: Wendy Artin’s Watercolor Paintings of Ancient Sculpture
Phase II: September 25–October 25, 2015

PASSIONATE CURIOSITIES EVENT
Film Screening
Al Momia, or The Night of Counting Years
October 30, 2015, 7:00 pm
Rackham Amphitheater
Discussion follows with Near Eastern Studies Professor Carol Badenstein

ROCKS, PAPER, MEMORY EVENT
A Workshop on Wendy Artin’s Engagement with the Classical Past
October 21, 2015, 4:00 pm
U-M Museum of Art Multipurpose Room

GALLERY DROP-IN TOURS
October 11, 2015, 2:00 pm
November 8, 2015, 2:00 pm
December 13, 2015, 2:00 pm

FAMILY DAY
November 14, 2015, 12:30–3:30 pm

OTHER ACTIVITIES
See a complete list of Kelsey events at www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey

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