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 Swan. There was clearly some kind of plan to turn this footage into a documentary, but the movie never came together, and the footage sat largely unviewed for decades. In preparation for Elaine Gazda’s landmark 1988 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 films’ contents. Most of what we knew about the films came from these films and their log.

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, research and teaching come together in her teaching collaboration with Margaret Cool Root, Curator of Near Eastern and Greek collections and Professor of the History of Art, retired this 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 2004–2009, 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 Achaemenid Art (1979). 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 10 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 seals on 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 seals and other subjects in which she has special expertise but also on a few general themes, Roman glass, and the U-M excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in Iraq. Her current exhibition, Passionate Carvatures, provides visitors with the opportunity to view a number of the Kelsey’s carvatures and to learn 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 Talbott, 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 book- and brick-chasing visitors who do know Margaret will surely come away with a strong sense of a very distinctive intellectual presence—of a passionate and curious mind.

Christopher Ratté, Director

“NEW” ARCHIVAL FILM FOOTAGE FROM KARANIS

The quality of the digitized video was 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 films 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-Fayoum, the modern capital of the region, and scenes of village life. In one sequence, the American Minster visits Cairo, leaving from the dig house with great ceremony. In another, the crew watch the Egyptian workers as they hold a celebration in the courtyard of the dig house—although it seems at least partly staged for the camera, we do get to see most of the workers who remain from archival still photography and existing reels.

But the greatest surprises of the new footage center on ancient times. A relatively uninformative sequence from the site was already digitized “Surveying” sequence needs to be reedited. Even better, the files also reveal a “lost” reel of footage that Michigan excavated in 1935, as an adjacent to the Kelsey excavations (fig. 1). The new Díme footage seems to predate the excavation, perhaps shot in the leadup to Michigan’s work there. The views of Díme, 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 greatly superior to the older transfer from video. I am currently in the process of cutting the huge videos 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 film reel images are scattered across the reels.

To give a simple example, there is a title “Surveying” in reel III, but the footage that follows this title shows canals and donkeys and has nothing to do with surveying. Reel II 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 resulting “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 these films, 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 painted marble fragments—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, lavishly carved marble head of a woman and others like her regarded as her gold, silver, emerald, and pearl jewels, failed attempt to escape. A selection of quantity of jewelry and coins during her pregnant woman who was carrying a large 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 cataloged the fragments, registrant Erin Anderson and her helpers spread them out on the storage room floor (fig. 4). 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 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 added 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 west wall of the room. The resulting reconstruction, greatly enhanced by John’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.

Elaina Gazda, Curator

Acknowledgments: Thanks are owed to all members of the Kelsey staff, to the donors whose generosity made this ongoing four-year exhibition possible, to Prof. John R. Clarke and all members of the Oplontis Project, to many colleagues in the Supercampania Speciali dei Beni Archeologici di Pompei, Ercolano and Stabiae, and to our colleagues at the U-M and L-M Labs. Exhibition dates and venues: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor, Michigan (February 18–June 12), Villa A at Oplontis, to a wider audience this February. I would like to thank Elaine for providing us with such an incredible in situ 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 Superintendency of Pompeii for their help in making this such an enjoyable and fruitful trip.

Please visit these websites for more information about Leisure and Luxury and the Oplontis Exhibition:

http://www.kelsey.umich.edu/kelsey/exhibitions/upcomingexhibitions

Caroline Roberts, Conservator
SUPERVISING THE FINDS LAB AT GABII

“Is this a rock?” asked a student, extending a dripping palm in which rested a gray-brown glistening lump. Although this is one of the more frequent questions at the Gabii Project, especially early in the field season, the correct response is not always immediately clear: the field is home both to stones that feature in smooth, deceptive curves and to coarse Iron Age ceramics that initially appear like clods of earth. Helping budding archaeologists learn to distinguish different types of material in the field and in the lab was one of the highlights of being able to work at Gabii this summer, thanks to the John G. Pedley Award for Travel and Research.

This summer was an invaluable experience. I am grateful for the generous support of donors to the Pedley Fund, which enables graduate students such as me to expand our learning beyond the campus.

Pedley Winners Report on Summer Expeditions to Italy and Greece

STUDY SEASONS IN GREECE AND ROME

This summer the John G. Pedley Award for Travel and Research brought me home to the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. I spent three weeks of June in the Greek region of Arcadia, participating in the fifth study season of the Mt. Lykaion Excavation and Survey Project. Between 2006 and 2010, the project undertook excavations in the mountaintop sanctuary of Zeus Lykaios in southwestern Arcadia. Every summer since then we have been studying the excavated materials in a storage and workspace, or apotheke, located in the city of Tripolis in eastern Arcadia. Tripolis is not the most glamorous city in Greece, but it has a certain charm and fine bakeries. In the apotheca I continued to assist with the study of materials from the ash altar of Zeus, located right on the peak of the mountain, where he is believed to have protected the underlying sediments from further human disturbance.

Elsewhere, the Mycenaean pottery was exposed to trampling, burning, and movement of sediment connected with the ongoing use of the mountaintop as a platform for burnt sacrifice. From late June to early August I spent seven scorching weeks in Rome, continuing my study of the architecture at the Roman temple site of Sant’Omobono in the Forum Boarium. Although the site was rediscovered in the late 19th century and has been under excavation and study for many decades, it has been the subject of only piecemeal publications, and no comprehensive treatment of the architectural remains exists. Filling this gap is one of the primary goals of the Sant’Omobono Project, a University of Michigan co-sponsored excavation directed by Nicola Terrenato. Accordingly, I have spent the past five seasons assisting the project topographer, documenting the visible architecture using a combination of total station survey, measured hand drawing, and digital photogrammetry.

This work now forms the core of my dissertation research, through which I hope to clarify the sequence of architectural phases at the site.

Along with IPCAA alumni Jason Farr and Geoffrey Mullan, I also undertook a project of sampling the various varieties of volcanic stone, or tufa, that make up most of the ancient architecture at Sant’Omobono. These samples will be sent for chemical analysis, the results of which we hope will shed light on the sources of the stone used and potentially allow us to differentiate between tufa types that are visually indistinguishable.

Dan Diffendale, IPCAA student

SUPERVISING AREA C AT GABII

Thanks to generous support from the John G. Pedley Award for Travel and Research, I participated in the University of Michigan’s Gabii Project this summer. Located 11 miles due east of Rome along the Via Praenestina, the city of Gabii was occupied from at least the tenth century BC until its decline in the second and third centuries AD.

Importantly, after the city’s decline, the site of Gabii was never again substantially occupied or developed; furthermore, no major, stratigraphic excavation had taken place at Gabii before the Gabii Project’s inception in 2009. The site provides a diachronic view of the “birth” and “death” of Rome’s nearby neighbor and rival, one of central Italy’s first cities.

This was my sixth year working at Gabii, under the direction of Professor Nicola Terrenato, and my first year serving as an area supervisor. In this role, I oversaw the reopening of excavations within one city block at Gabii, Area C, first excavated between 2009 and 2011. While the first three years of excavation had revealed a late Republican/early Imperial (roughly second century BC to first century AD) industrial complex and an earlier Republican house, this season we began working beneath the house levels of the house in order to understand what was happening within this city block before the second century BC. Our long-term goal is to connect the sequence in Area C with its neighbor, Area D. Area D contains a series of habitations ranging from tenth century BC, the earliest habitation at Gabii, down to the Archaic period (sixth to fifth century BC). By connecting the activity in Area C with its predecessor in Area D, we will have a more complete range of occupations from the tenth century BC down to the first century AD, something almost unheard of in central Italian archaeology. This summer my team moved toward our goal of understanding this sequence.

Alongside our excavations, teaching is a crucial component of what we do, training undergraduates in the nuances of archaeological excavation. As a supervisor, this summer initially posed for me to grow as a teacher of young archaeologists, instructing and organizing a team of four staff archaeologists and sixteen undergraduate volunteers from the University of Michigan and other institutions. A sample of the topics covered includes the basics of tool use and stratigraphic excavation, the tricks of our digital, tablet-based recording system, the basics of using ARCGIS software on an archaeology project, a scavenger hunt of random archaeological objects.

I also conducted some of my own research, studying the textile-making tools that were excavated over the past seven seasons at Gabii. This assemblage is one of the largest from a settlement context in central Italy. As part of my research, I was able to record basic information, 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 lunchtime lectures. My research on these objects will also be presented at the 2016 Archaeological 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

The laying of a mass of large stones in this area during the ensuing Iron Age, perhaps as part of a retaining wall, seems to have protected the underlying sediments from further human disturbance.

We discussed marks left by the production and use of the objects—the worn surface of a mold used for grounding, fingerprints pressed into the damp clay or smudged in gloss, shards refashioned into scrapers or game pieces—and engaged closely with objects in a way not normally possible in a museum or classroom. One of my favorite lessons is teaching students how to use texture to help identify ceramics—and any intrusive rocks.

Alternatively, I have spent the past five seasons assisting the project topographer, documenting the visible architecture using a combination of total station survey, measured hand drawing, and digital photogrammetry.

This work now forms the core of my dissertation research, through which I hope to clarify the sequence of architectural phases at the site.
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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