

BACKDIRT

A woman with sunglasses on her head is smiling and looking at a baby in a teal carrier. The baby is wearing a yellow and white striped hat. They are in a museum, looking at a stone bust of a person's head and shoulders. The background is a brick wall and a window.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT UCLA
DECEMBER 2019

Archaeologists in Action



BACKDIRT

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT UCLA

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FRONT COVER: Sarah and Sally Beckmann among a collection of Roman portraits from the villa of Chiragan, kept in the Musée Saint-Raymond in Toulouse, France. Sarah's article on several Late Antique sculptures from Chiragan appears in the January 2020 issue of the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

BACK COVER: Brittany Dolph Dinneen consolidates the surface of a cuneiform tablet in preparation for the reopening of the Morgens West Galleries of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University.
(Photograph courtesy of Emory Photo/Video).

ABOVE: Ruth Tringham, University of California–Berkeley, presents a Friday Seminar: Giving Voices—Without Words—To Prehistoric People, February 8, 2019.

To request a copy or for information on submissions, please contact the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press via email at: nomads@ucla.edu

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FEATURES AND FIELD REPORTS

Museology in Turin

Caroline Arbuckle MacLeod

The 2019 summer field school in Museo Egizio consisted of two five-week sessions of 16 students each, coming together to study museology and Egyptian material culture in Turin, Italy. This project is based on cooperation between the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology and Museo Egizio under the auspices of the Institute for Field Research, an independent, nonprofit organization that facilitates field research courses at many sites around the world. This particular summer field school represents the work of multiple generations of the Cotsen family. The program is codirected by the author, a recent Cotsen Institute alumna, and longtime Cotsen Institute core faculty member Hans Barnard. This year the teaching assistants were Danielle Candelora, a PhD candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA; Rose Campbell, another recent graduate of the Cotsen Institute; and Nicole Ingot, a recent graduate of the Department of Classical, Ancient Mediterranean, and Near Eastern Studies and Archaeology at the University of British Columbia. Participants joined

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the program from Australia, Canada, India, Spain, and the United States. Among the participants were a few graduate students and several UCLA undergraduate students, as well as hopefully some future archaeologists or conservators. Friday August 23, 2019, the summer field school featured prominently on page 47 of the large national newspaper *La Stampa*, which is based in Turin.

This year the field school was able to take advantage of the temporary exhibition *Invisible Archaeology*, which addressed the use of scientific analyses to explore the hidden stories of objects and the people who made them. Thus there was an emphasis on digital technologies this year, including the ethics behind the reproduction of objects for use in museum displays around the world. Students were asked to consider the value of historicity during the handling of ancient Egyptian objects and why these objects were more important than facsimiles. The use of computed tomography scans to study mummies was also called into question, as students debated the most appropriate ways to store, study, and display human remains.



Figure 1. The first group of students in front of the Basilica di Superga, which houses the tombs of the House of Savoy and was the site of the 1949 Grande Torino air disaster.



Figure 2. The author leads a tour centered on Egyptian texts in the collection of Museo Egizio.



Figure 3. The field school visits Palazzo Reale, home of the House of Savoy until 1946.



Figure 4. Fine art conservator Paola Buscaglia explains her work on an ancient Egyptian coffin being treated in the conservation department in the Reggia della Venaria Reale.

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Figure 5. Field school student Liam O'Reilly studies a display in the National Automobile Museum.

Students were immersed in the world of cultural heritage.

Lectures included an abridged overview of ancient Egyptian archaeology, history, and religion, necessary for students to understand the context of the objects they were studying. As in other years, a selection of curators, registrars, conservators, and administrators affiliated with the museum also served as instructors. In addition to leading visits to specific object groups on display in the galleries or stored in the large storage rooms of the museum, they also spoke about proper object handling methods, how to differentiate between forgeries and genuine artifacts, and what is often overlooked about running a large world-renowned museum. Over the course of five weeks, the students were immersed in the world of cultural heritage management and how this pertains to the care and display of objects from ancient Egypt.

To widen the view of the students and consider different display options, there were also visits to some of the many other museums in Turin. These included museums visited during previous iterations of the course, including the National Cinema



Figure 6. Museum curator Federico Poole discusses the differences between genuine and fake objects.

Museum (in the iconic Mole Antonelliana) and the Museum of the Holy Shroud, as well as some new additions, including the Cesare Lombroso Museum of Criminal Anthropology and the Francesco Garrier Valletti Museum of Fruits. By being exposed to dramatically different settings, students were able



Figure 7. Government archaeologist Alessandro Quercia explains the nearby Roman site of Industria, which preserves the remains of an Iseum and a Serapeum (temples to the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis, respectively).

to reconsider some of their responses to the ethical issues concerning display and digital tools brought to the fore earlier. Ultimately they realized that perhaps there are not always clear answers but that solutions often must be reached on a case-by-case basis and are bound to change over time and place. To add to their technical knowledge of object analysis, we were fortunate to be invited back to the state-of-the-art conservation laboratories in the Reggia della Venaria Reale to learn about cutting-edge techniques and overcoming challenges while working with objects in the field.

During the course of the field school, students also worked on digital projects, most importantly designing an online exhibit based on objects in the museum. For this they used the digital platform Omeka, an open-source content management system developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University. This platform allows students to create a database for objects based on the

Students also worked on digital projects.

common classifiers used by museums. The digital projects were designed to encourage students to display the culmination of their museological and historical knowledge learned over five weeks. The outcome is permanently stored on the server of the Digital Archaeology Laboratory at the Cotsen Institute.

To test the efficacy of such summer field schools as learning tools, the codirectors of the summer field school are undertaking a research project called “The Value of Digital and Museum-Based Pedagogy.” Through a series of voluntary questionnaires, student participants were asked to consider how hands-on object handling affected their ability to learn about ancient Egyptian history, the importance of preserving and studying physical objects, and the value of Omeka as a learning platform. This project will continue in the summer of 2020. It is our hope that this effort will allow us to refine our teaching methods and that the shared results will help other museums and archaeology programs consider the value of experiential approaches to teaching about archaeology and history through museums.

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Figure 8. The author explains the intricacies of wood identification using a handheld digital microscope.



Figure 9. Textile conservator Cinzia Oliva explains her work on animal mummies being treated in her laboratory in Museo Egizio.



Figure 10. The second group of students during the farewell reception at the end of their summer field school in Turin.



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