

Archaeological Institute of America Westchester Society

BULLETIN

Vol. XXXV No. 2 February 2010

The Last Days of Pompeii: *Decadence, Apocalypse, and Redemption*

Date: February 21, 2:00 PM

Location: Manhattanville College, 2900 Purchase Street, Purchase

Speaker: Kenneth Lapatin, J. Paul Getty Museum

Lunch with the speaker: Prior to the lecture contact Peter Feinman, 939-9071 or feinmanp@verizon.net.

Cost: \$15.00.

Cutoff Date: February 17

Pompeii is perhaps the best known archaeological site in the world. It and other sites destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79 have been the subject of numerous books, articles, exhibitions, films, television documentaries, etc., all of which, rightly, tend to focus on ancient artifacts and their recovery, with reception included, if at all, as a coda. This lecture, in contrast, examines the paradigmatic role of the destruction of Vesuvian sites on the modern imaginary, exploring the allegorical constructs of decadence, apocalypse, and salvation through painting, sculpture, and other media from the rediscovery of sites in the eighteenth century to the present day. The interplay between history and science, on the one hand, and staged fiction on the other, will be a major sub-theme, for the tragedy of these cities' demise has long been the foil to empirical and archaeological interest, with its focus on excavation, classification, and recovering a sense of daily Roman life.



Pompeii has persisted in western culture as the archetype for a destroyed civilization to the point to which other disasters – from the 1755 Lisbon earthquake to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina – are regularly compared to it. Catalyzed by the publication of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, a wildly popular 1834 novel that melded a Victorian love story with sensational narratives of pagan decadence, Christian subculture, and volcanic eruption glossed with a thin veneer of archaeology, Pompeii has become a platform on which fascination with apocalypse is inexorably linked to (mis)understandings of antiquity. Although seemingly the site where we can recover directly the everyday life of the ancients, Pompeii is regularly treated anachronistically, in the sense of the disaster being inevitable, cataclysm predestined, portents ignored, and punishment deserved. Indeed, today it is impossible to imagine Pompeii without thinking about the disaster. This lecture will examine how successive generations made the ancient tragedy their own as they vicariously relive the dramatic events of AD 79, albeit from a comfortable temporal distance, and will illustrate these acts of cultural appropriation and projection through some of the finest visual and literary imaginations of the last three centuries.



Lapatin is Associate Curator of Antiquities with the J. Paul Getty Museum. He holds his degrees from the University of California, Berkeley (Ph.D.), and Oxford University (M. Stud.), and his areas of specialization are ancient Mediterranean Art and archaeology (particularly the Aegean Bronze Age, Greek and Roman), historiography, forgery, reception, and luxury arts. He has conducted fieldwork in Caesaria Maritima (Israel), Roma and Corinth, and his main publications include *Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, and *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess: Art, Desire, and the Forging of History*. Dr. Lapatin is the AIA's 2009/2010 Joukowsky Lecturer.

Lectures are free to AIA Westchester Society members. A donation of \$5 from non-members is welcome.

SAVE THE DATE – APRIL 15, BUS TRIP

The Society is planning a bus trip on April 15 to the University Museum, Philadelphia. We will be greeted by Brian Rose, president of the AIA, who lead a private tour of the new exhibit *Iraq's Ancient Past: Rediscovering Ur's Royal Cemetery*. The book club recently read about the original discovery of the Ur by Sir Leonard Woolley

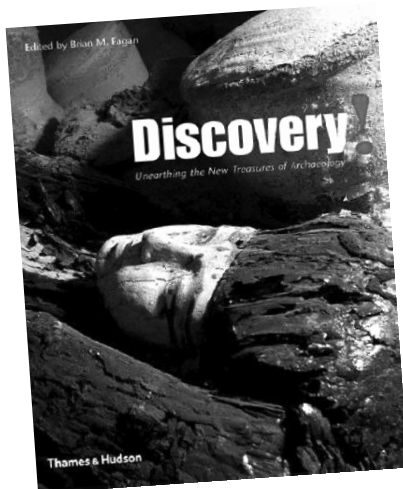
FEBRUARY AIA ARCHAEOLOGY BOOK CLUB MEETING

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Date/Time: Thursday, February 18, 2010 at 1:30 pm

Place: Greenburgh Public Library, Small Conference Room
Tarrytown Road (Rte 119) at Knollwood Rd., Elmsford

The Book: *Discovery: Unearthing the New Treasures of Archaeology*
by Brian Fagan



What an unfortunate convergence: reading the Apocalypse, Earthquakes at the very moment of the tragic earthquake in Haiti! We were certainly more knowledgeable about the earth processes that produced this terrible disaster as we watched the horror unfold. While not everyone had been able to obtain and read the month's book there was uniform agreement that the discussion deepened our understanding

of the context in which ruins are studied and the possibilities for explaining their destruction. There was no question that we learned a great deal about our earth, and we agreed that we would request that the AIA consider inviting Amos Nur or another scholar in this discipline to be one of their speakers to address the subject of deciphering ruins, determining construction conditions in earthquake prone areas such as the Near and Middle East, and evaluating natural vs human destruction.

We also agreed to make changes in the books to read for the forthcoming months. The assigned books are now as follows:

Meeting on March 18 – *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond

Bus Trip on April 15 – Tentative date set for AIA trip to University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology.
Archaeology private tour by AIA President Brian Rose

Meeting on May 20 – *Bandelier: The Life and Adventures of Adolph Bandelier, American Archaeologist and Scientist* by Charles H. Lange and Carroll L. Riley.

Used copies are available starting at \$5.95 on the web both at Amazon and Barnes & Noble

Meeting on June 17 – *The Mute Stones Speak* by Paul MacKendrick – or another book on the Etruscans if there is a more current recommendation.

While there is an aversion to buying books, the Bandelier book has already been purchased by several people. It is available as a used book starting at \$5.95 on the web. Or ask your librarian to try to find it; otherwise, find another book about Adolph Bandelier and the beginnings of American archaeology in the southwest if you do not want to buy the book. However, it is always much better if we read the same book.

Myrna Silverman

SCARSDALE ADULT SCHOOL CLASS

UNDERSTANDING MESOPOTAMIA

Date/Time: Three Thursdays, starting 3/11 1:30 - 3 pm

Location: Scarsdale Public Library

Teacher: Peter Feinman

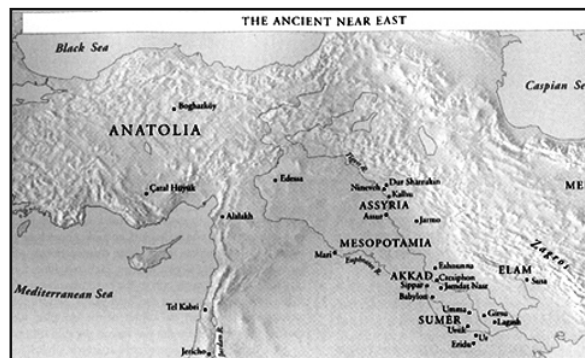
Date/Time: 4/8 Thursday, 1:30 - 3 pm

Location: Metropolitan Museum of Art

Day 02 Lectures and Museum: \$155

Day 03 Lectures only: \$115

To register: www.ScarsdaleAdultSchool.org
or call 914-723-2325



Students provide their own transportation to the Metropolitan Museum of Art

The story of ancient Mesopotamia stretches back to the dawn of historic time. A series of extraordinary civilizations that flourished along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers has fascinated observers from ancient times to the present. We will explore the rich history of Ancient Mesopotamia, with special attention to the art, architecture, customs and culture.

Dr. PETER FEINMAN, Ed.D, is the founder of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education. He created Teacherhostels/Historyhostels for people who love visit the historic sites of the Hudson River Valley or to learn about ancient civilizations and biblical history.

AIA CALENDAR

March 21: TBD, program in partnership with MALFA, a Westchester archaeology society based at Croton Point

April 18: 2:00 **Trading Patterns as Seen through Words for Tea and a 9th-Century Shipwreck**, Victor Mair, University of Pennsylvania, TBD

May 10: 7:00, **The Great Mysteries at Eleusis: An Archaeological Puzzle**, Pamela Webb, Bryn Mawr, at Kendal on Hudson, Sleepy Hollow

AMERICAN HISTORY SYMPOSIA - FREE *Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education (IHARE)* *The American Revolution in New York*

Date: March 6 from 9:00 - 2:30

Location: Manhattanville College, 2900, Purchase Street

New York and the Hudson River Valley in particular played a critical role in the American Revolution that is often overlooked. The Yankee-Red Sox rivalry has precedents in the telling of the story of the American Revolution. For too long Massachusetts writers have made Massachusetts the cosmic center of the confrontation. Now it is time for New Yorkers to have their say. Hear and met the scholars who are telling the New York story. See the displays of the historic organizations that preserve and tell the New York story. Share ideas on how to bring this knowledge back to the classroom.

Slavery in New York

Date: March 13 from 9:00 - 2:30

Location: Manhattanville College, 2900, Purchase Street

Gone with the Wind defined slavery for generations of Americans. Now we know better. Slavery wasn't something that simply occurred somewhere else with people we could look down on as morally inferior to the righteous abolitionist North. In recent years scholars have been working more successfully to publicly alter the traditional image of slavery in America by showing it was part and parcel of New York State history for over two centuries. Hear this story. Meet these scholars. Bring back to your classroom new insights, experiences, and contacts on slavery in New York State. Hear and met the scholars who are telling the New York story. See the displays of the historic organizations that preserve and tell the New York story. Share ideas on how to bring this knowledge back to the classroom.

(IHARE Symposia Continued)



Archaeological Institute of America

Westchester Society

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Scarsdale, New York 10583

Dated Material

Address Correction Requested

IHARE Symposia Continued

AMERICAN HISTORY SYMPOSIA - FREE

Institute of History, Archaeology, and Education (IHARE)

Life on the Hudson

Date: March 20 from 9:00 - 2:30

Location: Locust Grove/Samuel Morse House, Route 9 Poughkeepsie

Life on the Hudson began over four hundred years ago and continues now that the Quadricentennial has ended. Many peoples have lived along the river and interacted with each other. The story of life on the Hudson is one of art, culture, ecology, history, and history. No mere symposium can cover all its facets. The speakers here provide a glimpse in to the majesty and significance of a river that once defined America and still does although it does not received the attention it deserves.

9:15 The Hudson: America's River: *Fran Dunwell*, author

10:15 Sailing on the River of Dreams, *Hudson Talbott*, author

11:15 The Lenape: Lower New York's First Inhabitants: *David M. Oestreicher*

1:30 Life & Lessons in Local Lore – How to use your locale's history and heritage to teach, *Jonathan Kruk*, storyteller

FRIENDS AND HELP

The AIA Westchester Society is a voluntary non-profit organization that depends on its *friends* to be able to offer monthly programs in Westchester. So, please renew your **Friendship** if you are a *Friend of the Society* or we invite you to join our organization if are not.

Your help is requested. Please volunteer to help greet people who attend our lectures, with the newsletter, or in organizing the programs. Contact Peter Feinman, 914-933-0440 or feinmanp@ihare.org

President: Dr. Peter Feinman — (914) 939-9071

Secretary: Libby Webel — (914) 693-1179

Program Chair: Dr. Megan Cifarelli — (914) 323-7265

For more information on lectures and upcoming events — visit our website
www.aiawestchester.org