

# aia

## New York Society News



### THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

#### *Archaeology: Profession and Obsession*

The wind may blow and it may snow, but I know our loyal members will come out to our stellar programs. Many turned out to hear Jenna Coplin's wonderful talk on the Joseph Lloyd Manor despite pouring rain. Our upcoming lectures will take us from Stonehenge with Mike Parker Pearson to a Bronze Age city in China, and from the Archaeology of Chocolate (sorry – no samples) to the Egyptian underworld, a steamy place according to Lanny Bell!

And under the “why did I become an archaeologist?” we will have cinematic inspiration with our biannual film program. You surely won't want to miss “Celluloid Idylls: Swords, Sandals and Sex,” on Sunday, March 29, 2009 at the Anthology Film Archive (32 Second Avenue). The theme is “How Movies Helped Make My Career” – how many of us were inspired by the big screen? In my “other life” as a law professor, I know that many students have been inspired by LA Law, Boston Legal and Law and Order (my particular favorite). In my own life, when I declared my graduate school interest in archaeology, my mother threw up her hands and said “You always liked to play in the dirt.”

We will be treated to “The Ten Commandments” (1956) with commentary by the Pharaoh's son, Rock Brynner, a professor at Connecticut State University and Antonia Lant, Professor of Cinema Studies at NYU. New Board member, Brian Boyd, will be speaking on Holy Land landscapes in Hollywood films as well as his own inspiration from the cinema. Our afternoon film will be “Indiana Jones: the Last Crusade.” For those who are curious – or critical – actor Harrison Ford has been elected to the Board of the Archaeological

Institute of America. On the eve of the DVD launch of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, Harrison Ford noted, “I joined the Board of the Archaeological Institute of America because I recognize that it is important to understand our past in order to truly appreciate different global cultures both past and present.”

As Harrison Ford went on to say, archaeology is not only about discovery, it is about understanding who we are and where we come from. We have a duty to preserve the past for future generations and the AIA's Site Preservation Grant Program, which will support the conservation of ancient monuments, is well on its way with the project at the Temple of Athena in Assos, Turkey. The program has received a \$250,000 challenge grant and must reach this goal by December 31, 2008. I urge all of you to give what you can to this innovative and important project. For further information you can check the AIA web site, [archaeological.org](http://archaeological.org).

At the risk of repeating myself, the New York Society is the largest and most active of all the AIA local Societies. Although we are proud of that, we are not entitled to rest on our laurels. After 9/11, as with many organizations, our membership plummeted. So I ask every one of you to bring your friends to our lectures and urge them to join. Sure, there is plenty of “archaeology” on television and in the movies – and most of it is great fun. But it is not real archaeology! Real archaeology is more challenging. I wish all a Happy New Year and I look forward to greeting you at our upcoming programs.

*-Lucille A. Roussin-*

Interim President, AIA New York Society

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## aia New York Society lecture series for Winter 2009

January 29, 6:30 (reception to follow)

**“When the Bronze-Age State Acts: Archaeological Discovery of Documentary Administrative Inscriptions in the Wei River Valley”**

**Feng Li, Columbia University**

612 Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University (cosponsored with the Columbia Center for Archaeology)

During the past fifty years, thousands of bronze vessels have been excavated in China. Many bronze vessels carry long documentary texts, including a central group that actually copied official administrative documents used in the central court the Western Zhou state (1045-771 BC). Geographically, there is a high concentration of such texts in the Wei River valley. While archaeological research has sufficiently clarified the cultural meaning of bronzes and established standards for their dating, a large question remains: What do they tell us about the Bronze-Age state?

February 5, 6:00 (reception to follow)

**“The Stonehenge Riverside Project”**

**Mike Parker Pearson, The University of Sheffield**

612 Schermerhorn Hall, Columbia University (cosponsored with the Columbia Center for Archaeology)

Stonehenge is one of the world's great archaeological mysteries. Since 2003 the Stonehenge Riverside Project has been carrying out excavations and surveys to find out more about Stonehenge and its landscape. This multi-university project has revised the sequence within the monument, provided new insights into why it was erected where it was, discovered a large nearby settlement, recovered the remains of the people buried at Stonehenge, and uncovered new evidence of how and where the stones were worked.

March 11, 7:00 (reception at 6:30)

**“The Archaeology of Chocolate”**

**Rosemary Joyce, University of California, Berkeley**

National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South (cosponsored with the archaeology committee of the National Arts Club)

Chocolate is a widely appreciated luxury today, the center of multi-national trade. Most people know that chocolate originated in Central America. What is less well known is the recent explosion of knowledge about the early history of *Theobroma cacao*, the plant from which chocolate is made. This talk explores recent research, including my own work in Honduras, that has pushed the origins of human use of cacao back before 1100 BC. It considers what we now know was a wide range of ways of using cacao, including the possibility that the earliest use of cacao was for a fermented, alcoholic beverage. Touching on modern advances in archaeological chemistry, new understandings of the social life of food, and contemporary concerns about the roles women played in past societies, this journey through the history of chocolate is a window into the ways archaeology has developed in the last 20 years.

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*To view information about lectures and other AIA-NYS matters online, check out our website:*

[www.library.csi.cuny.edu/roccos/nyaia/nyaia.html](http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/roccos/nyaia/nyaia.html)

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 aia New York Society lecture series for Winter 2009 *continued...*

April 16, 7:00 (reception at 6:30)

**“The Reunion of Body and Soul: Sexuality and Resurrection in the Netherworld”**

**Lanny Bell, Visiting Scholar in Egyptology, Brown University**

National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South (cosponsored with the archaeology committee of the National Arts Club)

In the subterranean corridors of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings (1570-1070 BCE), the return to life is symbolized in the graphic display of sexual vigor. The particular form of Osiris found here, definitely a fertility figure, is identified as He Who Awakes Intact—recalling the episode of the Osiris myth in which the grieving Isis fails to find the severed phallus of her dismembered husband; nevertheless, he is able to engender their son Horus posthumously. This miracle is represented in the Sety Temple at Abydos, with its associated Osireion (burial place of Osiris). The promise of eternal existence is signified in the reversal of time, represented in the 12<sup>th</sup> (last) Hour of the Night. Re and Osiris separate once more as the sun rises to enliven the earth another day, while the inert corpse of Osiris—confined to his underworld domain—slumps down to await the return of the sun for a new cycle of rebirth. This complex speculative New Kingdom theology clearly expresses the Egyptians’ consummate faith in the power of life over death.

May 16, 2:00

**“Harbor of the Pharaohs to the Land of Punt: Excavations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, Egypt 2001-2009”**

**Kathryn Bard, Boston University**

Brooklyn Museum, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium, 3rd floor

Excavations at the pharaonic harbor site of Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, Egypt by Boston University and the University of Naples "l'Orientale" have uncovered the remains of Middle Kingdom seafaring expeditions to the land of Punt, located somewhere in the southern Red Sea region - ca. 1200-1300 km. south of this harbor. After construction at a shipyard in Upper Egypt, the ships were taken across the desert in pieces on a 9-10 day trek along with all the equipment and food that would be needed for these expeditions, and then reassembled at the harbor site. Seven man-made caves carved in a fossil coral terrace near the ancient harbor have been located by the excavators. In and outside the caves the archaeologists have excavated ship timbers, rigging, the remains of food and various supplies left there after expeditions had returned from Punt - including 43 cargo boxes which once contained "the wonders of Punt." Hieroglyphic inscriptions on stelae at the site provide historical information about specific expeditions.

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**PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NEWSLETTER**

Send news of your own or your colleagues’ excavations, new books, awards, or any other items you deem of interest to: Ellen Morris ([em129@nyu.edu](mailto:em129@nyu.edu)) or c/o New York Society News, 217 Manhattan Avenue #7A, New York, NY 10025

**ALSO, CONSIDER BECOMING AN ESPECIALLY GOOD FRIEND OF AIA-NYS**

The Friends are a small group of archaeology enthusiasts and professionals who go the extra mile to provide the New York Society with the ability to bring you the most extensive lecture program(s) in the AIA. In the past year there were ten lectures. To show our appreciation, we hold two or three private tours for the Friends along with our annual “Living Room Seminar.” Contact the co-chairs for information:

Lynn Quigley ([lquigley@plaxall.com](mailto:lquigley@plaxall.com)) and Jeff Lamia ([jlamia@nyc.rr.com](mailto:jlamia@nyc.rr.com))

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## *Spotlight on...*

### *Urban archaeology in New York City*

A number of interesting projects have taken place in New York City over the last couple of years. One of the most compelling, in some ways, was the recovery of four separate segments of a wall which served as part of New York City's defense system, and may also have been a seawall. The wall was part of outworks of the existing fort which were meant to hold gun emplacements and protect against a naval invasion. It was built during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and discovered during 2005-06 as part of the excavations in association with an enlarged subway station being built by the MTA at the southern end of the IRT No. 1 line. The wall itself is depicted on the Ritzer Plan (1766-67), and it appears that the two southern segments were constructed in the 1750's whereas the northern segments may have been earlier. There is some suggestion that the wall was constructed as part of the city's anxiety about the French and Indian war (1754-63). A wooden log feature found in association with one of the southern segments was dated by dendrochronology to 1734.

Few artifacts were recovered during the project, but all of the stones from the wall have been saved and belong to the NYC Dept of Parks. Two sections of the wall will be reconstructed, one within the subway station itself, and another will be placed in Battery Park when it is reconstructed. Linda Stone and Diane Dallal were the archaeologists in charge of the project.

Another significant project in New York was an evaluation of a portion of Washington Square Park, mandated by the New York City Parks Dept as they needed to place a buried water tank near the fountain in the park. Since it was known that some of the Park had originally served as a

potter's field (and later was a parade ground), Joan Geismar was asked to test in a number of locations in order that the project avoid disturbing burials. Seven burials were located in depths ranging from five to twelve feet below surface, all lay in sand which made any clear stratigraphy impossible. The Parks Dept. redesigned the project more than once in order to leave the burials in place. No artifacts were found in association with the burials.

Other notable projects in the city occurred in Staten Island, where Arnold Pickman, Wendy Harris and Eugene Boesch tested an area on which a quarantine hospital, then a Lighthouse Depot and Coast Guard facility had been located. They found walls from a 19<sup>th</sup> century building but were not able to identify to which structure they belonged. Alyssa Loorya excavated some 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden water pipes on Beekman St in lower Manhattan that were found as part of a project to replace New York City's infrastructure. The pipes were carefully excavated, documented and taken to the city's Department of Design and Construction Archive.

Joan Geismar has been reanalyzing artifacts from Weeksville in Brooklyn, a former middle-class African-American community. These had been excavated in the 1970's, from features associated with several houses apparently constructed in the 1860's, although originally it had been believed that the houses had been built in the 1830's. The recovered material found in cess pools or privies appears to date to the 1920's when sewers were connected in this area.

*-Nan A. Rothschild*

Barnard College/Columbia University

## ARCHAEOLOGY &amp; THE NEW SCREEN MEDIA STRIKES AGAIN--MARCH 29!!



The second event in the NYC-AIA new film program, **Archaeology and the Screen Media**, is entitled

*Celluloid Idylls: Swords, Sandals and Sex, or How the Movies Helped Make My Career,*

and will take place on March 29, 2009 at the Anthology Film Archives, 32 2nd Avenue in the East Village.

[www.anthologyfilmarchives.org/](http://www.anthologyfilmarchives.org/).

This respected archive is well known to film enthusiasts and offers state of the art technical support. The 10 AM to 5 PM day will be moderated once again by Peter Herdrick, the senior producer of TV's *Inside Edition* and National AIA Board Member.

We will start with excerpts from the second De Mille *Ten Commandments* (1956) narrated by Antonia Lant of NYU Cinema Studies, Tisch

[cinema.tisch.nyu.edu/object/LantA.html](http://cinema.tisch.nyu.edu/object/LantA.html).

Rock Brynner, son of the actor Yul Brynner, and a political scientist from Western CT State University will offer his insights

[rockbrynner.com/](http://rockbrynner.com/). In the afternoon session,

*Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade* (1989) will be shown, and Brian Boyd of the Columbia Dept of Anthropology (and Program Coordinator for the Columbia Center for Archaeology

[www.columbia.edu/cu/anthropology/fac-bios/boyd/faculty.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/anthropology/fac-bios/boyd/faculty.html)) will speak on the Holy

Land and the invented scenes and scenery conjured on celluloid. A Q & A will follow.

Films and the creation of Hollywood, along with the Bible, are arguably the two most influential sources in Americans' popular concepts and imagination of antiquity and indeed, the past in general. And while the academic term "archaeology" might mean a specific discipline existing within specific parameters, in the common sense it has come to encompass art, social and political history, as well as ancient texts, architecture, customs, dress, beliefs, religions and all kinds of evidence about how people lived in the past. And from the Discovery to the History Channels, archaeology has come to mean big business.

This film and discussion day seeks to begin an examination of how the media has employed film to inform us about "archaeology" as well as ask questions about how the creation of films--commercial and artistic works--have manipulated the facts for their own purposes.

The speakers are from diverse backgrounds but share a strong interest in these processes, and their careers have been shaped by the cinema. Using these two films--from differing periods of American history and of differing genre, but both about various concepts of "The Holy Land"--as a starting point, the speakers will discuss films in their lives and film in general. Students with IDs are free, and the usual Anthology Archive rate of \$8 applies to all others. For more information see our web site:

[www.library.csi.cuny.edu/roccos/nyaia/](http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/roccos/nyaia/)

Or, contact me directly at 718-577-9292; [JHSibal@aol.com](mailto:JHSibal@aol.com)

- Jim Sibal  
Archaeology and Screen Media Chairperson &  
Board member of the AIA-NYS

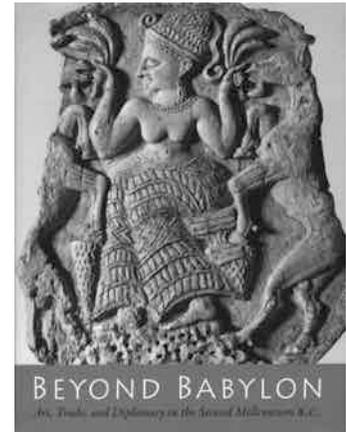
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Don't miss BEYOND BABYLON at the Metropolitan Museum through March 15, 2009!!

Be sure to catch this fascinating exhibit on art, trade, and diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C. Approximately 350 objects from Crete, Turkey, the Caucasus, Iran, Egypt, and numerous societies between have been gathered to illustrate the elaborate exchange networks, artistic influences, and elite ideologies that linked these diverse regions. As a centerpiece, many items from the cargo of the Uluburun shipwreck are displayed together in a simulated ship's hull, raw materials together with finished products.

Of special interest to those with a love of all things Hittite, at 3:00 on February 22<sup>nd</sup> in Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium Andreas Müller-Karpe and Gary Beckman will speak in a lecture and panel event.

Exhibitions of such ambitious international scope are rare for the ancient world, and the curators should be commended for mounting a show that will impress those with no background in the ancient Near East and will also awe those who have made it their life's study.



For more information see the Met's website:

[www.metmuseum.org/home.asp](http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp)

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