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# INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Newsletter 19 Fall 2017



NYU ISAW

# From the Director

This September, right after the new academic year got underway, we held an anniversary celebration recognizing the ten years since ISAW opened in 2007 (see page 5). The previous time that we hosted such an event, in May 2012, our guests were presented with a booklet, "ISAW at Five," featuring our people, programs, and ambitions. Rereading "ISAW at Five," it strikes me how far we have come, not just since our founding, but even since that halfway point.

The first five years were our period of rapidest growth, and by 2012 all the key elements that make ISAW what it is were in place: the Visiting Research Scholars and doctoral programs, the library, the digital projects, and the exhibitions. Our numbers were still on the rise, however: two faculty positions remained to fill, and we had just nine students, none yet at the dissertation stage, in comparison to our present twenty-five. More to the point, we were strongly conscious of the experimental nature of our enterprise, and that we were just beginning to try out various ways of realizing our mission. This sense of adventure should always stay with us, but now it can be counterbalanced by the reassurance that derives from a substantial track record of courses taught, examinations passed, exhibitions mounted, projects initiated and completed.

Over our first decade we have marked a long succession of "firsts." Now we can boast our first Professor Emeritus: our founding director, Roger Bagnall, retired from the faculty on September 1 (page 5). As I take on the directorship with pride and excitement, I would like to express the immense gratitude felt by the entire ISAW community for his wise and imaginative leadership, through which our institute has accomplished so much so fast.

Alexander Jones  
Leon Levy Director and Professor of the History of the Exact Sciences in Antiquity

## ABOUT ISAW

The creation of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) at New York University had its roots in the passion of Shelby White and Leon Levy for the art and history of the ancient world, which led them to envision an institute that would encourage the study of the economic, religious, political, and cultural connections among ancient civilizations across geographic, chronological, and disciplinary boundaries.

The Institute, established in 2006, is an independent center for scholarly research and graduate education.

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Cover Photo: The rock-cut monument of Darius I at Bisotun (courtesy of Wouter Henkelman)

Photo: @Andrea Brizzi

# Community

## Alexander Jones is Appointed Director of ISAW

President Andrew Hamilton  
and Provost Katherine E. Fleming

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Alexander Jones, Professor of the History of Exact Sciences in Antiquity, as Leon Levy Director of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. Alexander has served as interim Director of ISAW since September 2016, and was previously Acting Director in spring 2013 and Vice Director in academic year 2013-14. With this extensive leadership experience, Alexander is well positioned to assume the Director's role.

Alexander was the first ISAW professor hired in 2008, with an Associated faculty appointment in Mathematics in the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. Together with Christine Proust, he curated ISAW's 2011 exhibition on Babylonian Mathematics, Before Pythagoras, and he curated the 2017 exhibition Time and Cosmos in Greco-Roman Antiquity. Before coming to NYU, he was a member of the faculty at the University of Toronto's Department of Classics and Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology.

Alexander's scholarship centers on the history and transmission of the mathematical sciences, especially astronomy. He is the author of several editions of Greek scientific texts, among them Pappus of Alexandria's commentary on the corpus of Hellenistic geometrical treatises known as the "Treasury of Analysis"; an anonymous Byzantine

astronomical handbook based on Islamic sources; and a collection of about two hundred fragmentary astronomical texts, tables, and horoscopes from the papyri excavated a century ago by Grenfell and Hunt at Oxyrhynchus. He is a member of the American Philosophical Society, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a full member of the Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, and recipient of several awards and honors, including a Guggenheim fellowship and the Francis Bacon Award in the History of Science.

Alexander received his B.A. in Classics from the University of British Columbia and his Ph.D. in the History of Mathematics from Brown University.

Alexander succeeds ISAW's founding director, Roger Bagnall, who stepped down in August 2016 to return to full-time scholarship. We are grateful to Roger for his distinguished leadership of the Institute, which established ISAW as a great center of advanced scholarly research and graduate education.

Please join us in congratulating Alexander on his appointment. We look forward to continuing our partnership with him.



(L to R): Leon Levy Director Alexander Jones, Founder Shelby White, NYU Trustee Chair Bill Berkley, and NYU President Andrew Hamilton

© NYU Photo Bureau: Kahn

## Roger Bagnall Retires from NYU

On September 1, 2017, Leon Levy Director Emeritus Roger Bagnall retired from New York University as full-time faculty. At the beginning of the academic year on Orientation Day, the ISAW community celebrated Roger's retirement with a cake that read in Latin, "Strepitum relinque teque otio trade." This edited quote from Pliny the Younger's Letter 1.9 translates roughly to: "Leave the behind the hustle-bustle of the city and give yourself over to leisure." Roger will retain a working office and continue to be part of the community. He will continue to be on supervisory committees and conduct research on Amheida at the Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt.



## ISAW Celebrates Its Tenth Anniversary

Thursday, September 14th, 2017



Elizabeth Moynihan and Rob Goldrich



Carol Mandel and Raffaella Criboire



Andrew Hamilton, Alexander Jones, Katherine Fleming, Shelby White, and Bill Berkley



Alexander Jones, Shelby White, and Robert Rosenkranz



Frances Marzio and Kenneth Manotti



Amber Jacob, Kate Justement, Kyle Brunner, Lorenzo Castellano, and Rod Campbell

All photos © NYU Photo Bureau: Kahn

# Community

## Alumni Spotlight: Mehrnough Soroush

Marc LeBlanc

Assistant Director for Academic Affairs

In January 2016, while in the final semester of her dissertation work, ISAW alumna Mehrnough Soroush '16 began teaching as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Akron. During her time in Ohio, Mehrnough developed and taught two courses: one firmly in her direct area of expertise, "The Archaeology of Water," and the other slightly further afield for Mehrnough, "Egyptology." Teaching students from a variety of backgrounds, including first-generation college students, working students, and adult learners, was a challenging but rewarding experience that was made easier by Mehrnough's collegial and supportive faculty colleagues at Akron. A particularly exciting and important life event that took place during Mehrnough's time at the University of Akron was the birth of her son Mahan.

For the 2017-18 academic year, Mehrnough has accepted a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University, where she will contribute to a project entitled "Data



The Graduates of 2016 with Leon Levy Director Emeritus Roger Bagnall. (L to R): Randolph Ford, Mehrnough Soroush, Roger Bagnall, and Erik Hermans

from Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey" (EPAS) and continue to work on her own research and publication projects, which include an examination of the application of remote sensing for studying water history and the large-scale mapping and spatial analysis of qanat landscapes. The initial phase of the project, which Mehrnough will work on this year, will explore how recent advances in image-recognition through machine-learning can be employed for automated mapping of qanat shafts on CORONA satellite imagery.

Mehnough reflects on her time as a doctoral student at ISAW, "The combination of VRS and PhD program was something very special. It provided an incredible opportunity for students to connect to the professional world, practice critical professional skills, and to be constantly exposed to new ideas. Some of the most important opportunities of my graduate studies were made possible through my access to or collaboration with the visiting scholars. I hope that the current and future students tap this resource even more efficiently than I did!"

## Incoming Graduate Students

**Kexin Dai**

I received a B.A. in Art History from UCLA in 2016 and an M.A. in Art History from Courtauld Institute of Art (London) in 2017. During my time at UCLA, I worked as a research assistant and 3D molder in "Paris Past and Present," a digital humanities project to reconstruct lost monuments from medieval Paris, during which I developed an interest in the use of digital tools in opening up new research opportunities in art historical/archeological studies. I am particularly interested in religious art and architecture, as well as the movement and metamorphosis, appropriation and re-appropriation of a single visual motif throughout cultural and architectural spaces in Asian art. Having studied Victorian art and society at Courtauld Institute of Art, I am also interested in 19th-century antiquarianism in visual arts. At ISAW, I plan to continue acquiring relevant knowledge and digital skills to explore the rich religious arts in the Dunhuang Caves and along the Silk Road, which testify to the cross-regional transmission of visual motifs and knowledge.

**Amber Jacob**

I received my B.A. in Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies at the University of British Columbia in 2013 and my M.A. at the University of Copenhagen in 2016. My undergraduate studies focused largely on Greek philosophical and scientific (especially alchemical) literature and the contact and transmission of Greek and Egyptian knowledge. During my M.A., I pursued Egyptian philology, literature, and papyrology, specializing in late Egyptian language (particularly Demotic) and critical analysis of textual traditions. I also studied papyrus conservation in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and worked in the archives of the Collection. In my senior year, I returned my attention to the subject of early scientific thought through a study of Egyptian medicine, wherein I completed a text edition of an unpublished Demotic medical treatise from the ancient city of Tebtunis housed in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection for my M.A. thesis. Through my doctoral work at ISAW, I intend to pursue my interest in ancient science by opening up new avenues of research in ancient medicine through a comparative study of ancient Greek and Egyptian medical practice in Graeco-Roman Egypt.

**Katherine Thomson**

I hold a B.A. with Honors in Ancient History from the Australian National University and an M.Phil. in Economic and Social History from the University of Oxford. My interests center on the development of fiscal and monetary institutions in the ancient world and include premodern economic history and currency debasement. My goal at ISAW is to better understand the drivers of state currency manipulation in premodern economies.

**Zhonglin Zhang**

I received my M.A. in Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture at the Bard Graduate Center and hold a B.A. in Art History with a minor in Italian at Mount Holyoke College. I wrote my M.A. thesis on a group of four Western Han gilt-bronze horse frontlets

with distinctive designs of hybrid animal with contorted body, aiming to reexamine the visual representation and transmission routes of these objects and to understand their significance in Western Han funerary context. During my time at the BGC and after graduation, I worked as a curatorial intern and later as a research associate in the Asian Art Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the exhibition Age of Empires: Chinese Art of the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C.-A.D. 220). At ISAW, I intend to further investigate the transmission and transformation of knowledge and material in China, with particular attention to encounters and interactions along the Chinese frontiers and how they facilitate the exchange and change of both trends in metaphysical thinking and tastes in visual and material culture.



Incoming ISAW Graduate Students. (L to R): Katherine Thomson, Amber Jacob, Zhonglin Zhang, Kexin Dai

## Apply to ISAW's Doctoral Program and Visiting Scholar Program

ISAW is now accepting applications for its Doctoral Program and its Visiting Research Scholar Program. The recommended deadline for applications for fall 2018 enrollment in ISAW's Doctoral Program is December 18, 2017, and the final deadline is January 4, 2018; please visit <http://www.isaw.nyu.edu/graduate-studies> for more information and to

apply. The deadline for applications for one-year Visiting Research Scholarships (2018-19) and two-year Visiting Assistant Professorships (2018-20) at ISAW is November 20, 2017; please visit <http://www.isaw.nyu.edu/visiting-scholars> for more information and to apply.

# Community

## Visiting Research Scholars 2017-18

**Marta Ameri**, Colby College  
*Miniature Arts of the Harappan World: Seals, Sealing and Tablets as Small Windows onto the Indus Valley Civilization*

**Emily Cole**, Visiting Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles  
*Translation on Display: Multilingual Monuments in Ptolemaic Egypt*

**J. Andrew Dufton**, Visiting Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., Brown University  
*Works in Progress: Regional Trends and Grassroots Developments in the Cities of Roman North Africa*

**Yitzchak Jaffe**, Visiting Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., Harvard University  
*Rediscovering the Multiethnic & Multi-cultural Origins of Chinese Civilization*

**David Levene**, New York University, Classics  
*Livy: The Fragments and Periochae: Text and Commentary*

## Visiting Research Scholars Alumni News

**Nicola Aravecchia**, VRS 2009-10, will start a new position as Assistant Professor of Classics & Art History and Archaeology at Washington University in St. Louis in January 2018.

**Gilles Bransbourg**, Research Associate and VRS 2010-11, began teaching as an Adjunct Professor in the NYU Department of Classics in spring 2017.

**Frederic Clark**, VRS 2015-17, was awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Rice University's Humanities Research Center for the 2017-18 academic year.

**Matteo Compareti**, VRS 2013-14, was appointed International Expert in the School of Art at Renmin University of China in September 2016.

**Pam Crabtree**, VRS 2015, was promoted to Full Professor in the NYU Department of Anthropology in September 2017.

**Damián Fernández**, VRS 2009-10, was promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of History at Northern Illinois University in August 2017.

**Emily Hammer**, VRS 2012-14, was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania in July 2017.

**Sabine R. Huebner**, VRS 2007-8, has been appointed Visiting Professor in the Humanities Council and Stewart Fellow in Religion at Princeton University for spring 2018.

**Gina Konstantopoulos**, VRS 2015-17, was appointed Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Theology, at the University of Helsinki in August 2017.

**Stephanie Rost**, Visiting Assistant Professor  
Ph.D., State University of New York at Stony Brook  
*Ancient State Economies: A Case Study of the Umma Province of the Ur III State (2112-2004 B.C.)*

**Eva von Dassow**, University of Minnesota  
*Toward a New History of the Ancient Near East*

**Martin Worthington**, University of Cambridge  
*Interpreting the Minor Masterpieces of Mesopotamian Literature*

**Zhan Zhang**  
Ph.D., Harvard University  
*Khotan as Seen by Khotanese: A Documentary History of Khotan During the Sixth to the Ninth Centuries*

**Vincent Leung**, VRS 2014-15, was appointed Associate Professor of Chinese History at Lingnan University (Hong Kong) in August 2017.

**Rachel Mairs**, VRS 2007-8, was recently promoted to Associate Professor of Classical and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Reading.

**Maya Maskarinec**, VRS 2016-17, was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of Southern California in August 2017.

**Franziska Naether**, VRS 2015-16, was awarded a Visiting Research Scholarship in the Department of Ancient Studies at Stellenbosch University in South Africa for six months beginning November 2017.

**John Nicholas Reid**, VRS 2014-15, was appointed Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando) in January 2017.

**Robert Spengler**, VRS 2016-17, recently began a new position as Laboratory Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany.

**Juan Manuel Tebes**, VRS 2015, has been appointed Visiting Associate Professor in the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan for fall 2017.

**Kevin van Bladel**, VRS 2008-9, was appointed Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University in July 2017.

# Lectures

## Eleventh Annual Leon Levy Lecture

supported by The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation

*The Roman Caesars in Modern Art: Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*

Mary Beard, Professor of Classics, University of Cambridge, Fellow of Newnham College  
November 2, 2017 at 6pm

This lecture will explore the representations of The Twelve Caesars (from Julius Caesar to Domitian) in western art since the Renaissance, aiming to show that they are a much more difficult, edgy, and contested art form than those standard line-ups of busts on museum shelves would suggest. Examples will range from ceramic to waxwork, stone to silver, and they will include the extraordinary set of sixteenth-century Silver Caesars (known as the Aldobrandini Tazze), which are shortly to feature in their own show at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. One underlying question (often taken far too much for granted) is why generations of dynasts, autocrats, the old and the new rich, chose to decorate their homes and palaces with this collection of (largely) monsters.

Mary Beard is one of Britain's best-known Classicists—a distinguished Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Newnham College, where she has taught for the last 30 years. She has written numerous books on the ancient world, including the 2008 Wolfson Prize-winner, *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town*, which portrays a vivid account of life in Pompeii in all its aspects from food to sex to politics. Previous books include *The Roman Triumph*, *Classical Art from Greece to Rome* and books on the Parthenon and the Colosseum. Her interests range from the social and cultural life of ancient Greece and Rome to the Victorian understanding of antiquity. Her latest book *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* was published in 2015 to critical and popular acclaim.

In addition, Prof. Beard is Classics editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and writes an engaging blog, *A Don's Life*, selections of which have been published in book form. In 2013 *Confronting the Classics* was published, a collection of essays and reviews that she has written over the last 20 years for the *Times Literary*

*Supplement*, *London Review of Books*, and *New York Review of Books*.

Prof. Beard has been invited to deliver various prestigious lecture series. In 2008 she was Visiting Sather Professor of Classical Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, where she gave the Sather Lectures on Roman laughter. A based on the lectures, *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up*, was published by the University of California Press. In 2011 she delivered the Sixtieth A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., on the imagery of the Caesars. Prof. Beard's academic achievement was acknowledged, in 2010, by the British Academy, which elected her as a Fellow, and in October 2011 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as a Foreign Honorary Member. In 2012 she

was also elected as an International Member of the American Philosophical Society. In the Queen's New Year's Honours list for 2013, she was appointed to the Order of the British Empire for services to Classical scholarship. In 2014 The Royal Academy elected her as Professor of Ancient Literature, an honorary position first instituted in 1770, and most recently in 2016 she was awarded the prestigious Spanish prize, the Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences.

Prof. Beard is a regular broadcaster and commentator on radio and television, on programs such as BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time*, and has written and presented television documentaries on Pompeii and Caligula, as well as the highly acclaimed TV series, *Meet the Romans* and *Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit*. She has recently finished filming for the new BBC landmark *Civilisation* series.



# Faculty Focus

## From myth to history: Jean-Claude Ballyet, the French Enlightenment and Bisotun

Daniel T Potts

Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and History

The rock-cut monument at Bisotun in western Iran holds a special place in the history of ancient Near Eastern studies. The trilingual inscriptions there — in Babylonian, Old Persian and Elamite — played an important role in the decipherment of cuneiform. Both the texts and the associated image constitute a primary source on the ascension of Darius I to power.

But what was the significance of Bisotun before Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson began publishing its inscriptions in 1848? A 'Western' view appears in the work of Diodorus Siculus who attributed the monument, 'at the mountain known as Bagistanon,' to the mythical Assyrian queen Semiramis (Library of History 2. 13.1-2). Running right through Persian literature, embodied most famously in Nizami's poem *Xosrow and Shirin*, the 'Eastern' view attributed the carving at Bisotun to Farhad, the tragic lover of Shirin, wife of the Sasanian emperor Xosrow II (570-628 AD).



Portrait of Jean-Claude Ballyet by an unknown artist in the Hôtel de Ville, Marnay, showing Ballyet holding a letter addressed to 'Monsieur l'évêque de Babilone, consul de France à Bagdad.' Behind him is the plan of the church of Morteau, of which he was made Prior in 1752

Perhaps the first attempt to replace this folkloric or mythic explanation with an historical one appeared in a paper entitled 'Mémoire sur un Monument très-ancien sculpté dans une montagne de la Médie' (Memoir on a very ancient monument sculpted into a mountain in Media) which was delivered in 1755 at the Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in Paris by Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782). D'Anville attributed his information on Bisotun, which he never

visited, to an unpublished report written by Father Emmanuel de Saint-Albert, a Decalced ('barefoot') Carmelite monk (Carme déchaussé) and Vicar-Apostolic in Baghdad; who gave it to 'Monsieur Bellet,' medical doctor in Constantinople; who sent it to the Duke d'Orléans in Paris; who passed it on in 1743 to d'Anville, a man who combined the offices of Secrétaire

ordinaire of the Duke and tutor of his son, Louis Philippe I, with being premier Géographe du Roi, in this case, Louis XV.

I came across this intriguing example of the Enlightenment 'republic of letters' in action while tracking down a completely unrelated piece of information contained in Bourguignon d'Anville's paper. Although the many maps and writings of this great cartographer are well-known, as is the scholarly patronage of Louis, Duke d'Orléans (1703-1752), the other two names in this story — Emmanuel de Saint-Albert and 'Monsieur Bellet' — are not. Emmanuel de Saint-Albert was the

'nom de religion' of Jean-Claude Ballyet (1702-1773). Born in Marnay (diocese of Besançon), France, he was appointed Pro-Vicar of Baghdad in 1728 by Pope Benedict XIII; named 'consul of the French nation' in Baghdad by Louis XV in 1741; and consecrated Bishop of Babylon in 1743. He died of the plague in Baghdad in 1773.

Kindly supplied by Vincent Bellot, Mayor of Marnay

Assyriologists and archaeologists may have seen his name in connection with the early identification of the ancient site of Babylon, but since the French Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy published his *Mémoires sur diverse Antiquités de la Perse* in 1793, Ballyet's important observations on Bisotun which, among other things, cast doubt on any Sasanian association, mediated via the story of Farhad and Shirin, have been largely ignored. Ballyet had two opportunities to visit Bisotun: between November, 1729, and May, 1730, and again between May and August 1735, when he lived in Hamadan. He also made detailed observations on the Sasanian reliefs at Taq-e Bostan. Edward Ives, an English surgeon, who met Ballyet in Baghdad in 1758, reported a lively account given to him by the Carmelite of the site 'wherein is a great deal of sculpture in marble, with Basso and Alto Relieves, representing battles, trophies, arms, men, and camels; and one most remarkable horse whose body seems quite detached from the wall.'

Isaac Bellet (1693-1780) is equally intriguing. Appointed one of many royal doctors to Louis XV in 1737, he undertook secret negotiations

for France in Constantinople one year later. Known in psychological and medical circles for his provocative treatise *Lettres sur le pouvoir de l'imagination des femmes enceintes* (Letters on the force of the imagination in pregnant women, 1745), he was a member of the Academy of Sciences of Bordeaux and also served as Inspector General of Mineral Waters in France. With such a background, one would not necessarily expect to find an expert on matters ancient Near Eastern, yet one of his letters to the Duke d'Orléans sent from Constantinople reveals that he had received instructions from d'Anville to investigate certain geographical matters, as well as a map which he showed to a Georgian interpreter who was familiar with some of the placenames in which d'Anville took an interest.

The work of Ballyet and Bellet truly exemplifies the republic of letters that characterized the intellectually vibrant atmosphere of the mid-18th century and shows us, yet again, that many topics of interest to us today were already being actively investigated by our Enlightenment predecessors.



The rock-cut monument of Darius I at Bisotun

Photo: Moutier-Helkeman

# Exhibitions

## Restoring the Minoans: Elizabeth Price and Sir Arthur Evans

October 5, 2017 – January 7, 2018

The Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW) continues its efforts to illuminate ancient cultures and their interpretation through the lens of contemporary art with *Restoring the Minoans: Elizabeth Price and Sir Arthur Evans*. The exhibition presents A RESTORATION, an immersive video installation by artist Elizabeth Price in which images drawn from Evans's excavation, on Crete, of the Bronze Age culture of the Minoans are transformed into a work of art for the digital age. The video, made in response to a commission by the London-based Contemporary Art Society to create an artwork based on the collection of the University's Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums, will be contextualized and complemented by some 60 objects. These will comprise original artifacts unearthed during Evans's excavation and later restored by Evans and his team, as well as related watercolors, drawings, photographs, and archival materials. Many of these objects have never been publicly exhibited prior to this exhibition.

In A RESTORATION, Price explores critical questions about how archaeologists, artists, curators, and others make long-silent civilizations speak to contemporary audiences, how reliable those interpretations are, and how contemporary conditions influence the way we understand the ancient past. These are all questions that go to the heart of ISAW's work and mission.

### A RESTORATION

Price's brilliantly imaginative 18-minute video, shown in a gallery of its own, is at once serious and humorous, conceptual and visual, and powerfully engaging as it raises questions about our views of the past, including how we arrive at them, what they tell us about our own era, and how—and if—we can distinguish the known from

the unknown. The video is narrated by a digital chorus of unseen female "museum administrators" who describe the process through which they organize and re-imagine ancient objects, including but not limited to those from Evans's work at Knossos. Their very first words summon the complex layering of meanings and questions in the work: "We are cultivating a garden," they say, at once eliciting Evans's idyllic view of Knossos and using it as a point of departure for what they themselves will be creating within the confines of their museum's computer server.

As the administrators examine Evans's work, they describe the how he frequently re-imagined, rather than restored, archaeological artifacts. They note that "it is unusual...for restoration to be quite so indiscreet," but add that "we have resolved to extort its ribald energy for our own ends, and cultivate a further germination." This they do. With percussive, driving, music; images that may tumble across the screen, or morph into new forms with a stroke of gouache, or be layered one on top of another; and with their ever-present narrative voice, Price's administrators use Evans's practice as a point of departure to build, bit by bit, a contemporary digital paradise that contains within it a reconstruction of the Knossos labyrinth.

In doing this, A RESTORATION also invites consideration of how archaeologists, museums, and institutions organized knowledge, categorizing by form, and the way that knowledge is organized today, into digital folders living on museum servers. They acknowledge that the act of organizing these folders is repetitive and so they tell us how, like Evans, they take liberties, copying files into different locations, "roll[ing] their thumbs" and "extend[ing their] "middle fingers a little further than is necessary."

Throughout A RESTORATION, the images, music, and voices inhere to one another, creating a multi-layered, resonant whole with tremendous narrative drive, simultaneously questioning what we know, or think we know, and how we know it.

### Related Material

Thanks to the generosity of the Ashmolean Museum, *Restoring the Minoans* includes a selection of archaeological artifacts, along with diverse materials from Oxford University's Sir Arthur Evans Archive, that bring to life both the Minoan city of Knossos and Evans's methodology. Organized into several thematic groups, this presentation will show how, working both at the site and in the restorer's studio, Evans and his team meticulously restored, reconstructed, and sometimes re-created what they believed to be the Edenic city of Knossos—much as Price's administrators do in virtual form in A RESTORATION.

One telling example of Evans's imaginative re-creations is the "Lady in Red." Here, one of his primary draftsmen has created an image of a complete figure based on a single small fragment of a fresco painting. The female subject, characterized by such features as lines indicating a coquettish smile, is more evocative of contemporaneous European art, than of anything found in Minoan wall paintings. It may have been "restorations" like this that inspired Evelyn Waugh in 1929 to note that restorers of Minoan painting "have tempered their zeal for reconstruction with a predilection for covers of *Vogue*."

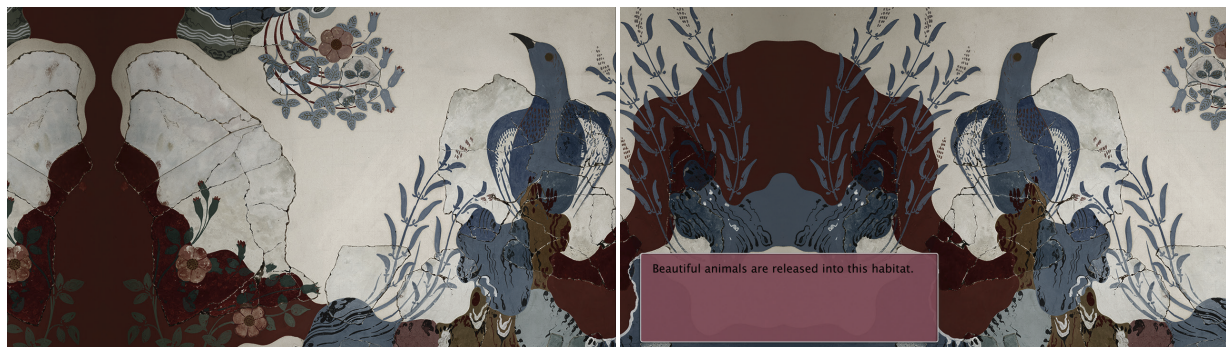
Another section of this display comprises a group of watercolors, ink drawings, and sketches of architectural motifs and decorative elements found at Knossos that illustrate the way that, in a system

dating to the Victorian era, Evans organized knowledge into categories of type and form. Yet the motifs themselves, which were used in Evans's restoration of frescos, often closely resemble late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artistic styles rather than those found in antiquity.

Evans and his team did strive to be as archaeologically accurate as possible when the evidence allowed. This is seen in watercolors of bull-leapers—acrobats who featured prominently in decoration at Knossos—based on close observation of images better preserved on sealstones and signet rings. The general composition of this scene, with a bull at the center with acrobats performing a leaping athletic feat, has in fact been confirmed by recent reexamination.

### Support

The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue were made possible by generous support from the Selz Foundation, The Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, and the Leon Levy Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Frances Marzio, Hicham and Dina Aboutaam, and Lizbeth and George Krupp.



From Elizabeth Price, A RESTORATION. Video/installation, 2016. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford: WA2017.87. Still showing watercolor representation of the Minoan "Bluebird" fresco restored by Émile Gilliéron fils.

## Exhibition Event Series

Thursday, October 5

HERE

Elizabeth Price, Artist

Thursday, November 30

The Prehistory of Crete

Malcolm H. Wiener, Aegean Prehistorian

RSVP required at [isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp](http://isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp) or to 212.992.7800. All events are at 6pm and are followed by a reception. Events are held in the Lecture Hall and are open to the public. Admission closes 10 minutes after the scheduled start time.

# Conferences

## *The Scribal Mind: Textual Criticism in Antiquity*

Conference organized by Emily Cole (ISAW Visiting Assistant Professor)

September 21, 11:45am-8:00pm, September 22, 9:30am-5:00pm

The intellectual exercise of textual criticism is far from a modern invention. Without the regularity provided by printing, there were constantly different texts in circulation, and it was up to learned individuals to figure out how to make sense of them. While no manual on the assembly and editing of ancient manuscripts existed in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, or China, scribes diligently worked through copies of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, Sumerian Incantations, or Buddhist manuscripts, and noted variants as they went. It is the intention of this conference to draw out the details of how those scribes produced a text tradition, added commentary to new editions, or marginalia to old ones, and what these practices might say about the culture in which the scribes were working. In three related panels, conference participants in various fields of study will consider the conception, process, and culture of textual criticism in the ancient world with the intention of better understanding the place of scribal communities in antiquity.

*The conference is co-sponsored by ISAW, the NYU Center for the Humanities, the NYU Center for Ancient Studies, the NYU Classics Department, and the NYU East Asian Studies Department. RSVP required at [isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp](http://isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp)*

## *Eastern Iran and Western Central Asia during Late Antiquity (3rd-5th cent. CE): Numismatics, Archaeology, and Art History in Dialogue*

Conference organized by Sören Stark (ISAW)

September 29, 9:00am-5:00pm

Late Antiquity in Western Central Asia and Eastern Iran—that is the centuries between the downfall of the Great Kushan dynasty and the beginning of Türk suzerainty—remains a particularly obscure period. Major questions concerning even basic political and cultural developments are still poorly understood. Yet, it is clear that this period was one of important and momentous political, social, demographic, and cultural change—such as the rise of Iran as a new hegemonic power in the wider region, the ascent of Sogdiana as one of the main cultural and economic power-houses of Eurasia, and the influx of new populations and elites, labeling themselves and/or labeled by others as “Huns.” One of the major problems faced by any historian of Late Antique Central Asia and Eastern Iran is the dearth of historiographical (narrative) sources. All the more important are numismatic, epigraphical, and archaeological data, which have in recent years greatly improved our overall knowledge of the area during this supposed “dark age.” Yet, each of these disciplines has its own methodological, terminological, and epistemic vantage point, and systematic cross-disciplinary awareness of new and important research results are still all too often lacking. The primary goal of this one-day workshop is therefore to improve the dialogue across what are key disciplines for the study of Eastern Iran and Western Central Asia during Late Antiquity, with a regional focus on Bactria/Tokharistan and Western Sogdiana.

*The event is co-sponsored by ISAW, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the Chicago Initiative for Global Late Antiquity. RSVP required at [isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp](http://isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp)*

## *Digital Publication in Mediterranean Archaeology: Current Practice and Common Goals*

Conference organized by Tom Elliott (ISAW), Sebastian Heath (ISAW), David Ratzan (ISAW), Erin Averett (Creighton University/AIA), and Eric Kansa (Open Context/White-Levy Program for Archaeological Publication)

October 20, 9:00am-5:00pm

This conference, which will be hosted at ISAW, is being co-organized by ISAW and the Shelby White-Leon Levy Program in Archaeological Publication, in partnership with the Archaeological Institute of America. The conference speakers represent projects that have published data and reports online, newer efforts exploring digital publication, and resources that enable long-term preservation and publication of archaeological results. The day will end with a wide-ranging panel discussion that will take account of current practice in digital publication and the impact on archaeological practice while also exploring how projects can work together to achieve greater integration of and access to archaeological research.

*The event is not open to the general public, but is open to interested scholars by RSVP. Please contact the conference organizers for more information.*



Fragmentary Silver Plate (British Museum, acquired in Rawalpindi, 4th century?)

# Public Events

## SEPTEMBER

### September 18

*Architectural Conservation in Egypt's Western Desert: The Amheida Project*

Nicholas Warner, American University in Cairo

### September 26

*Water in Sumer †*

Stephanie Rost, ISAW Visiting Assistant Professor

## OCTOBER

### October 5

*HERE \* †*

Elizabeth Price, Artist

### October 10

*There Goes the Neighborhood: Gentrification and Urban Redevelopment in Roman North Africa †*

J. Andrew Dufton, ISAW Visiting Assistant Professor

### October 12

*Conserving Cairo 1882-2012 \* †*

Nicholas Warner, American University in Cairo  
ARCE Lecture

### October 17

*Chinese Bronze Age Economics: A Multi-sited Approach to Shang Dynasty Bone Crafting †*

Roderick Campbell, ISAW

### October 23

Prospective Student Open House \*  
10:30am

### October 23

*Spying on Antiquity: Declassified US Intelligence Satellite Imagery and Near Eastern Archaeology †*

Jason Ur, Harvard University  
AIA Lecture

### October 24

*Theology of Liberation in the Second Millennium BCE: The Hurrian Song of Liberation †*

Eva von Dassow, ISAW Visiting Research Scholar

## NOVEMBER

### November 2

**Eleventh Annual Leon Levy Lecture supported by the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation**

*The Roman Caesars in Modern Art: Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities \* †*

Mary Beard, University of Cambridge

### November 7

*Language and Deception in the Gilgamesh Flood Story †*

Martin Worthington, ISAW Visiting Research Scholar

### November 13

*Ancient World Research and Tools in Synergy*  
Mark Depauw, University of Leuven

### November 28

*Monumental Art and Political Change in Ancient Syria*  
Alessandra Gillibert, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

### November 30

*The Prehistory of Crete \* †*

Malcolm H. Wiener, Aegean Prehistorian

## DECEMBER

### December 5

*The History of Eighth-century Khotan as Seen from Khotanese Documents †*

Zhan Zhang, ISAW Visiting Research Scholar

### December 7

*The Silent Fall of an Empire in 1200 BCE*

Lorenzo d'Alfonso, ISAW

### December 14

*Tricks of the Trade: Scribal Creativity in Ancient Egypt \* †*

Emily Cole, ISAW Visiting Assistant Professor  
ARCE Lecture

*All events are held in the ISAW Lecture Hall and begin at 6 pm unless otherwise noted.*

*Admission to lectures closes 10 minutes after scheduled start time. Please visit [isaw.nyu.edu](http://isaw.nyu.edu) for event updates.*

*On a limited, first-come, first-served basis, ISAW is able to provide assistive listening devices at public events in our Lecture Hall. To ensure an optimal listening experience, we recommend that guests bring their own headphones (with a standard 1/8-inch audio jack) to connect to our devices.*

*Please direct questions, comments, or suggestions to [isaw@nyu.edu](mailto:isaw@nyu.edu).*

\* Registration is required at [isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp](http://isaw.nyu.edu/rsvp) or call 212.992.7800

† Reception to follow



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