

## SALVAGING PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

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*Abstract:* A method is described for salvaging both photo documentation, and careers in conservation. I can't see the point of all these damned abstracts! Why don't you just read the bloody paper? Or is that too hard?

### Introduction

In May of 1985 at the request of Dr. Pappalardo, Director of Excavations at Herculaneum, Gaël de Guichen, Assistant to the Director for Special Projects and Fred Greene ICCROM Fellow (SPC 81) traveled to the site of Herculaneum to consult on an assemblage of recently excavated human remains. In the past, skeletal remains from the site had been removed from their location, cleaned, analyzed and restored. They were then labeled, boxed, and housed in a new building on site. These recent excavations had exposed extremely well preserved skeletal remains of Roman citizens buried in the eruption of Mt Vesuvius that destroyed both Pompeii and Herculaneum in 79 AD. ICCROM was contacted to determine if the skeletons could remain *in situ* without deterioration. The possibility of exhibiting the remains in context had great interpretive potential. The mission's goal was to examine the remains and formulate options for their exhibition and preservation without removing them from their final resting place and losing this extremely important context. The mission was of utmost importance.

The results of the mission were documented in an ICCROM mission report *Mission à Herculaneum*, 17 Mai 1985. The report includes sections on the condition of the skeletons *in situ*, analysis of the factors leading to their fabulous preservation, existing environmental conditions, and finally options for their preservation, exhibition and interpretation.

### Small Problem

The report is housed in the ICCROM library but, like the skeletons buried at Herculaneum, it contains a secret that until this day has never been revealed. Fred Greene, on his first archaeological mission, was in charge of photo documentation. Though he diligently documented the days work, unfortunately in his haste and enthusiasm, he had forgotten to load the camera with film. At the end of the day, much to the dismay of both apprentice and mentor, there were no photos for the report. Drawings and photos from *National Geographic* were cleverly utilized instead.

This moment of film dementia haunted Fred Greene for the remaining months that he remained at ICCROM as a parking attendant. After a brief and uneventful career as a semi-professional hockey player (Mukilteo Millionaires, Many Berry Berries, The Seven Persons Sixers and Mamshit Stinkers) he now lives in isolation on the prairies of Alberta, Canada.

### Image Recovery

Ever aware of the potential for technological advancement through ICCROM funded research projects, Gaël de Guichen carefully preserved the empty camera in a sealed box of indicating silica gel. Funded by a generous GETTEE administered grant this author has employed the very same camera that was used to *not* record the work at Herculaneum to demonstrate an amazing technological breakthrough. Using digital technology the author has devised a system of scanning lenses of cameras to reveal images which, though difficult to detect, do exist.

The complete record of photos that were taken, or in this case not taken, through the lens are lightly imprinted onto the glass. The author has devised a method to document, digitally separate, and record these images in chronological order and, with minor image manipulation, resuscitate lost images. The following images were digitally lifted, separated, and manipulated digitally so that, for the first time since that fateful day in Herculaneum (in 1985, not 79 AD), we are able to photographically reconstruct the mission.



Figure 1. Scanned lens image



Figure 2. Leaving Roma for Napoli.



Figure 3. Arriving in Ercolano



Figure 4. Skeleton and jug.



Figure 5. Mother and child.



Figure 6. Dinner in Napoli.

## Reference

Greene, Wilfred; de Guichen, Gaël, *Mission à Herculanium* (Rome; Iccrom, 1985); 11, ill., fig., 30cm.