

Lecture Transcript:

Conserving Coptic Heritage: an Historic Egyptian-American Partnership by Elizabeth Bolman Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Louise Bertini:

Hello, everyone. I want to thank you all for joining us for our special lecture today on "Conserving Coptic Heritage: a Historic Egyptian-American Partnership." I'm Dr. Louise Bertini, the Executive Director of the American Research Center in Egypt. For those of you who are new to ARCE, we are a nonprofit organization composed of educational and cultural institutions, professional scholars and members alike whose mission is to support research on all aspects of Egyptian history and culture, foster a broader knowledge about Egypt among the general public and to strengthen American-Egyptian cultural ties. In line with today's lecture, ARCE will be releasing another virtual tour, and we do this once every 2 weeks, and our next virtual tour will be coming out tomorrow, June 4th, and this release will allow you to explore the Monastery of Saint Anthony, and on June 18th, we will be releasing a virtual tour on the museum of the Monastery of Saint Anthony, and you can visit all of ARCE's virtual tours on our website, arce.org. We also have a number of upcoming virtual events including our online member-only lecture series to which the next one will take place on June 6th at 1 p.m. Eastern Time and is sponsored by ARCE's New England chapter and Vancouver interest group, and the lecture will be by Dr. Ines Torres entitled, "Creativity and Innovation in Non-Royal Tombs of the Old Kingdom: The Mastaba of Akhmeretnisut at Giza." You need to be an ARCE member to join that lecture, so if you are not already one, you can visit arce.org and sign up today. You can also sign up from our newsletter where you can follow us and have more up-to-date information on lectures and events. So without further ado, I'm very pleased to introduce Dr. Elizabeth Bolman. Dr. Bolman engages with the visual culture of Eastern Mediterranean and the Late Antique and Byzantine periods. She edited and was the principal contributor to the award-winning "Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of Saint Anthony at the Red Sea" published by Yale University Press and the American Research Center in Egypt in 2002 and was the editor of "The Red Monastery Church: Beauty

and Asceticism in Upper Egypt," Yale University Press and American Research Center in 2016. The most recent book is the product of a multidisciplinary project that she founded and directed, which including the cleaning and conservation of spectacular and unparalleled early Byzantine paintings at the Red Monastery. She is appointed the Elsie B. Smith Professor in Liberal Arts and chair of the Department of Art History and Art at Case Western Reserve University and leads the joint program between Case Western and the Cleveland Museum of Art. She is the recipient of fellowship and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, Fullbright program, National Endowment for the Humanities, Dumbarton and Oaks, the American Research Center in Egypt and the United States Agency for International Development among others. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Bolman, and I do want to just draw everybody's attention to the Q and A button to which you can post questions during and after the lecture. So, Dr. Bolman, over to you.

Elizabeth Bolman:

Thank you so much, Louise. Thanks, everybody. I've been super excited about giving this lecture. It's been an amazing process assembling all the images and the information and thinking about the last 25 years, so thank you for joining me. I'm dedicating this lecture to Adriano Luzi and Luigi De Cesaris, the first two leaders of the conservation team responsible for cleaning and preserving the monuments of Coptic, that is to say Egyptian-Christian, heritage that will explore together today. They passed away far too young. It was a privilege to know and work with these remarkable men, and they are always in my heart. This is a story about collaboration in the past and the present. It is also a story about a painted tomb and three monastic churches and expands a millennium and a half. I'm showing you here an inscription in the monastery dedicated to Saint Anthony that lists over 30 donors who collectively paid for the painting of a church in the early 13th century. It represents a significant partnership, one of my themes today. I will return to this image, these donors and the monastery later. My story also involved a small but remarkably powerful group of people working together over a 26-year period between 1993 and 2019. Emblematic words from my talk today are partnership, as I already mentioned, revelation and privilege. The partnership was between the United States Agency for International Development, the American Research Center in Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism. It comprised numerous people of various faiths and national backgrounds, far too many to list. You will see

some names in my slides in the course of this lecture, but the large majority of the participants will not be named. They are no less important for that. Our mission was the preservation of the Coptic heritage of Egypt through the conservation of Christian wall paintings from Late Antiquity to the early 18th century. The main problem that we encountered was that these remarkable paintings, which survive in historic churches, were almost completely covered by thick deposits of soot and grime. The Christian worship performed in these buildings included the ritual use of lamps and liberal clouds of incense wafting prayers to Heaven, which caused the interiors to be slowly blackened with soot and smoke until their wall paintings gradually lost all visual coherence. We can thus actually see these obscuring layers as the materialization of centuries of devotion. One rationale behind the USA funding to clean and conserve these churches was to stimulate tourism and thus expand local economies. That purpose has been and will continue to be fulfilled hopefully for centuries into the future as ... sites are now much more widely known and frequently visited. The revelations are many. We discovered and conserved a 5th-century tomb made for the monastic leader Shenoute of Atripe. We revealed one of the most extraordinary early Byzantine churches in existence located near Shenoute's tomb in Upper Egypt. We also uncovered two stunning programs of 13th-century paintings at the site where, according to tradition, Monasticism began, the Hermitage and later Monastery of Saint Anthony the Great, and we revealed exceptional Medieval paintings at the nearby home of the legendary hermit Saint Paul. Perhaps even more extraordinary was the fact that at Saint Paul's, we discussed the place where the long-standing tradition of monumental Christian painting in Egypt was resurrected. I say resurrected because large-scale painting on walls seems to have passed out of knowledge and practice in the 14th century in Christian contexts along with the decline in the wellbeing of the Copts. One other important way in which these projects exemplify the word revelation must be emphasized. It has to do with history and art. The Western narrative about the history of civilization includes Ancient and Islamic Egypt. It was, however, completely ignorant of Coptic contributions to world heritage. Aside from the users of these churches, the only people who knew about them were a small group of scholars dedicated to the study of Coptic civilization. Yet no one, not even Coptologists, could have predicted the spectacular outcomes of this late 20th and early 21st-century Egyptian-American collaboration. It is worth noting that, at the start of our partnership, the quality of these paintings was totally unknown, so we were really making a leap of faith. Both creation and conservation took a lot of

vision, funding, planning, talent and effort. The dramatic contrasts between the monuments before and after consolidation, cleaning and reintegration cannot be overstated. It is as if a curtain had been pulled back and a light had shown on the paintings. Together, we have written entire missing chapters in the history of art. Our international and interfaith collaboration and projects are gifts to global cultural heritage. We all feel privileged. In this trying time of plague, deep inequity and violence, it is encouraging to reflect on what people can do working together to make beauty and meaning in the world. It is also reassuring to think about how much we share with those who have come before us and with each other. Thank you for sharing this time with me. I will be presenting our tomb and three churches in the order in which they were created and weaving in the conservation work as we go along. Before diving more deeply into these remarkable stories, I will very briefly orient you to the historical circumstances. Our time periods span the 4th through the early 18th centuries. At the start, our place is the late Roman, or Early Byzantine Empire. The Byzantines are Medieval Romans whose primary language is Greek. The Roman Empire had, for centuries, grown well beyond the city of Rome and the Italian peninsula ultimately encompassing the entire Mediterranean region and well beyond. Egypt played an important role producing much of the Empire's grain as well as major players in the upper echelons of early Byzantine society. In the early 4th century, the first Christian-Roman emperor converted to Christianity and legalized the religion. He thus made it possible for the very first time openly to create Christian social organizations and churches. All of our monuments are in monasteries. Christian monasteries are same-sex communities in which the goal is to leave the world behind and exist in a state of perpetual prayer. A vast array of types of Monasticism coexisted. Egypt was famous for its contributions to the birth of Monasticism, and people from distant places came there to learn about it and practice it. Two of our monuments are in an aesthetic grouping that scholars call The White Monastery Federation. It is best known for its brilliant and domineering third leader, Shenoute, who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries, and we'll be returning to this painting of Shenoute later today. The White Monastery Federation was located far from Cairo to the north and Luxor to the south, near the Upper Egyptian city of Sohag and the ancient Panopolis, now called Akhmim. The federation including hundreds and, very possibly, thousands of members. A small number were hermits, but most lived in regimented communities: two for men, today called the White and Red Monasteries, and one for women a short distance to the south. The federation followed a particularly austere

lifestyle with one meal a day when they weren't fasting and periods of prayer interspersed with work and very little sleep. Shenoute was well over 100 years old when he died. He had raised the social, financial and political profile of the monastery to remarkable heights and constructed one of the most impressive buildings in the 5th century anywhere in the empire which you see here. Although he repeatedly told his followers to bury him in a secret place without ceremony when he died, they obviously felt compelled to treat him with all possible respect. He passed away in 465 C.E. We know this because some distance to the northwest of his monumental church, Dr. Saad Mohammed Mohammed Osman of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism discovered an underground painted tomb. Subsequent work was undertaken under the direction of various people and institutions. This view will give you a sense of scale. It is not high enough to stand in comfortably. My husband is bending his knees to make sure he doesn't touch the paintings. The main burial chamber shown at the upper right is a low barrel-vaulted space preceded by a vestibule with a shallow dome. In this view, you see the vestibule and some of its paintings. The subjects were carefully chosen and disposed in the spaces. They're common in funerary culture throughout the empire, peacocks, eagles, sheep and more kinds of animals, and all together, they evoke paradise. The dome was decorated with an eight-rayed cross. You can only see a few remnants of the rays here, and here's a sheep, a peacock and an eagle. The burial-vaulted tomb is painted with trompe-l'oeil marble panels below and two deer and a cross on the back wall. One of the most ... subjects in the tomb is that of Saint Shenoute himself flanked by two angels. The inscription above his head says in Greek, and I would like to point out not Coptic, but in Greek, that this is the tomb or shrine of Father Shenoute, the Archimandrite. An Archimandrite is a monastic superior. Shenoute fills one quadrant of a carefully laid out program that dominates the upper regions of the tomb chamber. The other three quarters are each filled with a large gemmed cross. In this view, we're looking out towards the vestibule, and Shenoute is on our right. We are now looking in the other direction into the barrel-vaulted tomb. Shenoute is on our left, and we can see the other three quadrants filled with crosses. At first, the enclosure of Shenoute seemed to me like a disruption of the rigidly quadripartite system of the vault. Realizing, however that his pose with arms raised was meant to replicate the pose of Christ on the cross resolves the initial appearance of imbalance between the four quarters of the tomb vault. As mentioned earlier, three are occupied by jewel crosses. In the northwest square, Shenoute takes the place of one of these crosses. In his pose of prayer, he

embodies the cross imitating Christ. A surprisingly large number of elite painted barrel-vaulted tombs have survived in the Eastern Mediterranean. Shenoute's tomb is Egyptian only in that it shows the Egyptian Abbot and it is located in Egypt. Otherwise, it could've been found anywhere in the empire. Shenoute's monks created a fittingly elite tomb for their extraordinary Abbot and showed him already standing in paradise. In about 450, shortly before his death, Shenoute built this enormous and impressive church. The monks at the Red Monastery copied its basic design on a smaller ... monumental scale. The White and Red Monasteries obtained their colloquial names from the colors of their exterior walls. While looking similar to Pharaonic temples on the exteriors, the White and Red Monastery Churches are otherwise both very traditional Roman basilicas with elaborate three-lobe sanctuaries. Both of these architectural forms, the basilica and the triconch, were common in the Mediterranean region, the rectangular nave and the three-lobe space here serving as the sanctuary. This historical reconstruction of the Red Monastery Church shows generally speaking what both would've looked like when they were built. So I hope you can see my cursor here. Here is the nave with colonnades, a gallery level and a clear ... of windows and a pitched roof over the center. The sanctuary is upraised. What survives in extraordinarily superb condition from the Early Byzantine Red Monastery Church is in the eastern end. So you're seeing a kind of slice devised from laser scan data. I'll speak about that more later, but we're looking directly to the east in this image on the left. On the right, you see a closeup with barriers at the top of the steps in front of the sanctuary, a huge monumental wall enclosing the three-lobe sanctuary, and then if you imagine a three-leaf clover, in plan, you'll have a sense of the basic outlines. This amazing triconch is hidden by the facade wall with its painted sculpture. So what I'm talking about here is this enormous wall that extends over the enormous chancel arch and extends all the way down to either side. It blocks your view into the sanctuary. So the triconch is hidden the view of the nave. Here is a photograph of the dramatic three-lobe space itself. The eastern end was the focus of my project. I will mention later work at the site shortly. The three deep curves of the lobes rise in two levels of niches articulated with freestanding columns, compound pediments, trompe-l'oeil pilasters and the like, and tablatures separate the registers. The semicircle of the plan is replicated vertically framing the semi-domes. They enclose the viewer in a dynamic space that can only be fully appreciated from inside. So here's the ground plan of the sanctuary. This is the three-leaf clover plan, and in this view, we're looking at the north and half of the east lobes, so they rise. This

semicircle is repeated here and here. It flips upwards and encircles the semi-domes. The Red Monastery triconch includes three major phases of painting, all created between the last 5th and 6th or early 7th centuries. The evidence for the short time frame is based on the very small amount of soot between the layers. These three phases of paintings were massive endeavors that would've taken a considerable amount of expertise and funding to create. They attest to the continuing wealth of the monastic community. All of these paintings are either tempera, also called secco, or encaustic. None are frescos. The view shows a detail of encaustic, a wax-based paint, looking as if it were still in a liquid state dripping down the walls. Unlike the technique the fresco painting, in which pigments bond with the damp plaster, in secco and encaustic, they are applied to a dry plaster surface making them much less durable than frescos. Astonishingly, these original layers of paint and plaster at the Red Monastery still survive extending from the floor to the top of the clear story windows. Stylistically, the paintings of the three major faces vary considerably including illusionistic on the left and also stylized renderance on the right. All of the paintings add a tremendous amount of exciting visual data to the corpus of Egyptian-Christian wall painting and to the known body of Early Byzantine art more broadly speaking. I will not be discussing any of the figural paintings in the Red Monastery Church in this lecture, but we'll focus on the most distinctive component of the second phase of painting, its ornament. The complete surface coverage and bewildering array of detail expressed an empire-wide aesthetic preference for variety, contrast and color. Contemporary authors described its glories in other buildings around the Mediterranean, some surviving but most lost. They noted that the effect was so intense that the viewer's eye could not rest on a single spot but jumped from place to place. Modern scholars call this aesthetic the Jeweled Style. Other examples of lavishly colored and patterned interior decorations survive in the sturdy medium of mosaic as here at San Vitale in Ravenna. In the ancient and Byzantine worlds, it was likely the most common method of bringing color into architecture. Its fragility means that it has not weathered the passage of time well. No other monumental interior from Ancient Greece, Rome or Early Byzantium includes such an expanse of paint. Let me restate this astonishing fact. No other monumental interior from Ancient Greece, Rome or Early Byzantium includes such an expanse of paint. We're talking about over 1,000-year period. This monument is utterly unique in the world. I mentioned earlier that seeing the magical work of the conservators on blackened walls was like pulling back a curtain or turning on a light. The people who performed the magic were Adriano Luzi

whom you see here, Luigi De Cesaris, Alberto Sucato and Emiliano Ricchi. Their work briefly comprised of the consolidation, cleaning, aesthetic reintegration and documentation of the paintings and the process. The drama of these glorious paintings unfolded gradually. I will briefly illustrate this with our friend, the abbot Shenoute, whom we saw earlier. You can't see him, but he's there underneath the soot at the back of this niche. Here are before-and-after views taken from different perspectives but of the same part of the wall. Astonishing, isn't it? The work of the conservation team was simply extraordinary, so in these views, these freestanding columns are here, and ... Oops. Sorry. And the image of Shenoute is back here hiding, and here, you can see him clearly. Here is a closer view of the abbot, once again. He gazes intensely out at us dressed in the monastic uniform of the federation. All conservation interventions were documented carefully as you see in this detailed drawing of the subjects. On the left, you see Shenoute, the painting itself after conservation, and on the right, you see documentation of some of the conservation interventions. So the green shows consolidation of the rendering which is the support that the paint was on. The blue shows areas where the paint itself was coming off and had to be reattached, and this orange documents areas where there was complete loss. So along here, there was a gap, a deep gap in the surface that the conservators filled in with plaster that was very similar to but slightly weaker than the original plaster, and instead of leaving it white where it would capture our gaze and distract us, they painted it a neutral color that fades into the background, so your eye is able to focus on what remains in the painting instead of areas that were lost. After I finished sitework, Pietro Gasparri and Nicholas Warner laser scanned the church creating a very high-quality three-dimensional record of the monument. This section created from the laser scan data gives you an idea of the stunning results. Warner and his team continued to work on the entire complex including the largely medieval nave, now roofless, and an adjacent medieval tower. Sucato and Ricchi conserved the medieval paintings in the nave, many of which had not been seen for centuries. So one of these paintings is here, an equestrian on horseback, and right here, Nicholas and his team are erecting parts of columns that had been on the ground for centuries. Theo Gayer-Anderson and Hani El-Tayeb cleaned and conserved the Early Byzantine-sculpted portals. You see here the columns that Warner re-erected, and he also paved over the dirt of the nave floor. This view of the nave is not a photograph. It is made from Gasparri's laser scan data and shows the proposed roofing plan to provide protective shade for the paintings. This plan is effective, historically appropriate, elegant and

minimalist. All and all from the time I conceived of the Red Monastery project at the end of the 20th century with sitework starting in 2002, our team has continuously been involved in documentation, conservation, renovation, scholarly study and publication of this extraordinary monument. We're now going to jump forward in time 700 years. If anyone listening is looking for more churches to conserve and wants to fill in this time gap, they exist. Just let me know. So in the 13th century, Egypt was no longer part of the Byzantine empire but was under Muslim rule and had been for about six centuries. Coptic culture continued to flourish after Egypt was lost to the empire, a fact which has been known only to Coptologists prior to our project at the Monastery of Saint Anthony. Tradition has it that Saint Anthony the Great found Christian Monasticism at this remote location near the Red Sea in Egypt's Eastern Desert. He lived in a cave and the mountain. Followers flocked to join him and imitate his way of life. Eventually, they created a monastery. When one approaches today, it appears as a distant line at the foot of the mountain, so I'm talking about this here. As one gets closer, the massive rock face looms over the walled monastery. The fruits of the monastery's spring have made this arid place a special garden in the desert. Father Maximous al-Antony was our collaborator here in his monastery and gave us extraordinary hospitality. He also worked tirelessly with our group for all four projects as a conservation consultant and monastic liaison. The work quite literally could not have been done without him. The Old Church of Saint Anthony has a complicated history which we will not discuss today. What I want to show you are, first, the dramatic results of the conservation, and second, a brief overview of some of the 13th century paintings. So in this photograph on the left, you see Adriano Luzi completing the cleaning of a final square of thick soot and oil that had covered the painting. So he's applying tissues to the soot and oil, and on the right, you see him removing them very delicately, the tissues from the wall. The work is incredibly painstaking and very difficult. The drama of conservation was as spectacular here as in the Red Monastery. We're looking at two photographs of the same archway in the Church of Saint Anthony. The photograph on the left was taken in 1930 or 1931. The one on the right dates to the mid 1990s. Luzi and [Indistinct] had cleaned two small squares as a test to evaluate the paintings and their support, so I hope everyone can make out this archway here corresponds with this archway here, and you can just see a little bit of the writing in this 1930 or '31 photograph. We're going to be looking at a conserved view of this painting of the Virgin Mary and Christ child shortly too. Here is another view post conservation on the right. It's almost unbelievable how different

the two look. Here is the Virgin Mary and Christ child. Here it is before. This monumental archway we now see is filled with two spectacular angels, and here is Saint Anthony himself, and this, in case you are wondering, on the screen was burned into the wood in the early 17th century by a visiting Franciscan named Bernardos who had an obsession with putting his name in various places in the church. These monuments don't stop frozen in time, obviously. They change every day. Okay. Let's back up for a moment and look at the church as a whole. It is nestled in the heart of the historic monastery. Here, you see two domes over the nave, and the eastern end of the church is obscured by palm trees. In 1232 or 1233, someone decided that the church needed to be repainted on a grand scale. Perhaps monks initiated the idea. Perhaps a wealthy Copt in Cairo did. The work and skill level required to accomplish this were considerable. Erecting scaffolding and using paint to create large-scale figures on walls were not simple tasks. Over 30 donors paid for the paintings, as you know, because I began this lecture with their important record. The benefits to these financial backers were numerous. Of course, they earned credit in heaven. More than that, however, their names, a kind of proxy for themselves, continuously performed their identities in a space of intensive, powerful monastic prayer. This has been ongoing for 800 years. It seems likely that their names were read aloud as part of at least some prayer services, ample reward for their financial investment, indeed. A considerable amount of planning went into this major project prior even to painting the subjects. Plastering the walls is, all by itself, a very big job. The artists would've had quite a few assistants just as our fine art conservators did. Figuring out how to map the messages they chose to express is also a very complex process. We have a glimpse of the interaction between the person or people who came up with the subjects to be painted and the artists because the conservators found placement labels. In this view, you can see the word cherubim on the right above the angel. This is an informal label. Clearly, someone went around and indicated what should be represented and where. Presumably, one of the painters stood on a ladder or scaffolding and wrote the titles. Then spaces were divided, and decisions were made about who would paint various subjects. So Maximous and Demetius here are in their own square with an arch. They were painted by one artist. The artist who painted this larger square was several monastic fathers, and the cherub or Seraphim was a separate artist. You can see their informal labels up here. Ultimately, these placement labels were covered over, and more formally written names were added to the paintings. These paintings are not passive depictions.

They are power objects. Cops believe that they are a point of access that can connect them to the holy figures. The carefully designed iconographic program maps out protection and salvation in the interior of the church. The word iconography refers to the subjects and elements within a painting that combine together to tell a story. In this painting, saints Anthony and Paul, left and right, stand facing us in a position of perpetual prayer. Their labels, former labels in white, help identify them. The pose and choice of clothing are part of the iconography. Anthony is shown in the monastic dress common to cenobitic or communal monasticism. Paul is dressed more austerily in keeping with his status as a hermit. A raven up at the top in the center holding a white disk brings an important narrative element into the composition. It represents a moment when Anthony, who had been searching for Paul, arrived at the hermit's cave. The raven had brought half a loaf of bread daily for Paul by himself, but when Anthony visited, the bird brought a complete loaf ... indicating God's blessing on their meeting. Paintings of saints on horseback gallop around the western half of the nave protecting the entrance to the church which you can see on the far right. One of my favorites is Saint Victor shown here on a decorated horse, whose pattern is made by shaving the hair off parts of its coat. One can still see horses ornamented in this fashion now and then in Egypt. Victor sits triumphantly with a little smile on his face. Angels extend crowns of martyrdom to him from Heaven. Beneath the horse, Victor's torchers are depicted. He was roped to a millstone and also immolated in a bathhouse furnace shown engulfed in flames. So here is Victor in the lower right with flames all around him in a position of prayer and this lovely little bathhouse with its glass globes and domes. Monastic fathers and circle viewers standing in the eastern half of the nave. They exemplify the successful monk and provide models for emulation appropriate for a monastic community. Another theme is salvation such as the popular story of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace from the Old Testament Book of Daniel. These young men refused to renounce their faith and were condemned to a martyrdom by fire. The red flames surround but do not touch them, so you see some of the flames up here and here and here. The angels sent by God protect them from the fire. The style of these paintings is powerful, and here, we see the Virgin Mary and Christ child who I ... which I pointed out to you a couple of times before. The paintings are colored with strong saturated burgundy, olive green, ochre, pale blue, black, brown and white. Outlines and stylized patterns create representational subjects. The mother and child face us and make arresting eye contact. They sit in front of their throne rather than in or on it. The elaborately decorated seat conveys

something of the importance of the holy subjects. So they're supposed to be shown seated on this throne on this cushion, but there's no indentation on the cushion, so it's almost as if they hover in front of the throne. The artists had absolutely no interest in fabricating ... that the wall is a continuation of space like Renaissance artists did. These Coptic artists were creating power objects. The impact and authority of these figures is intense. The lead artist signed his name, Theodore, and a date which corresponds to 1232, 1233 C.E., and that also corresponds to A.D., so early 13th century. We know from close visual analysis that there were at least two lead painters working on this program. They likely did not live in the monastery but came from a major urban center such as Cairo. We found traces of their work in the capital in a church dedicated to Saint Sergius in old Cairo. You see detail of those paintings on the right. Note that their round faces, almond eyes and long thin noses are quite similar, but the line thickness is different. In Saint Anthony's, the lines are thinner and more precise. The mouths are different. The Virgin has two curved lines framing a central red oval, so one curve up, one curve down with this red oval in the middle. Christ has a much larger central oval without those curves above and below and a narrow rectangular lower lip leading to his beard. Another difference is the facial color. Chris is much whiter, and the pink dots of color on his cheek are prominent. What we see here are different artists working in the same general style. The same can be said for a contemporary painting of the Virgin Mary in the Cave Church of Saint Paul. The strong outlines, the round face and almond-shaped eyes are the same, but the use of color is strikingly different with much stronger red and white lines. The eyes are opened wider, and she stares at us with a much more fiery look that is arresting, to put it mildly. It's easy to believe that this image on the right connects us with a holy figure, such as its intensity. Again, we see the same general style but clearly different artistic hands. This all amounts to a picture of a thriving group of artists sharing a similar approach to rendering subjects in and around 13th-century Egypt. Cops flourished in this time period generating not only great wall paintings but extensive Christian-Arabic literature. Artists using distinctly different styles also worked in this period in Egypt, even within the same monument. I draw your attention to a space between the general nave and the sanctuary called the Khurus ... showing its relationship to the paintings of the mother and child on the left and Saint Anthony and Paul on the right from the 1232, 1233 program. So here's Mary and the Christ child, Anthony and Paul and this screen with Bernardice's name emblazoned on it, and this screen marks the entrance into this Khurus space, this intermediate space. This

screen is in front of the actual sanctuary with the altar. A team of artists painted the underside of the archway and the ceiling using two completely different artistic languages, one a Byzantine figural style and the other an elaborate ornamental style. Both of these were standard visual options in this time period, especially in urban centers like Cairo. These two paintings ... of the same subject, the Angel Gabriel, will serve briefly to illustrate the differences. We do not have time for a detailed stylistic analysis, but you can see immediately that the color pallets are different. As one example, the strong red in the painting on the left was not one of Theodore's options. The painting on the right includes marvelous patterns with strong outlines and delicate linear work. The angel on left is outlines also but with much thinner lines which are more calligraphic. The faces and overall proportions are also composed very differently. I mentioned that the later Khurus paintings included an ornamental style which you see here. These marvelous bands of varying type of motif and text create a rich, intricate effect. They remind some of you of what is often called Islamic art. In fact, it is simply the most current ornamental style of the moment created in lands that were under Muslim control. We find these patterns in Coptic churches. We find them in Jewish synagogues and, of course, all over mosques and houses, palatial houses in Cairo. So on the right, you see the painted ceiling of one of these palatial residences in Cairo which includes a closely-related series of patterns. What better choice to adorn the house of God than beautiful elite paintings that expressed the glory of God? Decorative Coptic and Arabic inscriptions as part of this program of paintings quote the psalms, underscoring and association of the Church with the heavenly Jerusalem. So there are Coptic inscriptions here and here at the base. We're looking straight up into the ceiling, here at the base of the paintings, and then there's Arabic here and here not as well preserved. The Coptic texts quote from Psalm 86/87, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, oh city of God." You may recall that I mentioned that the longstanding tradition of creating monumental Christian holy images on walls in churches died out in or shortly after the 14th century. This seems to have been due to harsh man-load discriminatory measures compounded by the Black Death. Interestingly, the story of the revival of large-scale Coptic painting took place very near the Monastery of Saint Anthony in its brother monastery dedicated to Saint Paul the Hermit, shown here. Life in these remote desert monasteries was very austere. Supplies came but rarely imported from Cairo and properties along the Nile Valley. The isolation was extreme, impossible for most of us to imagine even in this time of social distancing.

Imagine the quiet of the desert punctuated by the sounds of prayer and singing, and when you approach Saint Paul's, you come at it through this wadi or kind of gully, so you drive between these high walls and then up here, and here's the wall of monastery. At the start of our project at the Monastery of Saint Paul, the space was also covered in soot. These photographs show you once again the theatrical quality of the painting's revelation. The Cave Church is literally a church that surrounds a cave, and the ceiling and walls to the back and right in these views are carved out of the living rock. So this is essentially the same view with this face of a saint corresponding to this, and this depiction of Mary and the Christ child flanked by angelic creatures corresponds to this. So the ceiling was pretty much as black as some of these robes. This monastery had been abandoned for about a century, and at the beginning of the 18th century, the Coptic patriarch John XVI sent four monks from Saint Anthony's to re-establish Monasticism at Saint Paul's. Medieval monks had transformed the original cave of Paul the Hermit into a small church. We already saw some of the paintings from that phase of work. The 18th century monks considerably enlarged the church with the addition of three-domed chambers, and John XVI consecrated it in 1705. So it's a very complex space. You enter here from high above, and I'll show you some diagrams in a moment. You come down the stairs, and you enter the northern nave which is a built structure. Right in front of that is the sanctuary of the 24 elders. This is also a built structure. This, this, this and this are carved into the living rock. This is a built structure, so three sanctuaries off of a very oddly shaped nave and shrine space. This view from Thomas Whittemore's expedition in the early 20th century shows the impressive keep at Saint Paul's. This is an early 18th century church dedicated to Saint Michael, and below this is the Cave Church of Paul, and this elegant drawing by Nicholas Warner shows us, again, the keep, the church above and one comes into the Cave Church down a narrow alleyway right about here through a staircase into a nave space with the cenotaph of Saint Paul at the end and then three sanctuaries. This is the ground level of the wadi or gully, so the whole thing was carved into the wall of a gully. Two of the original four monks sent to refound monastic life at Saint Paul's went on to succeed John XVI as patriarchs, that was to say, popes of the Coptic church. So think of it. Three men originally monks at Monastery of Saint Anthony who had been sent to Saint Paul's became popes one after the other. Their story shows what a phenomenal impact a small group of people can have. In the interest of time, I will only focus on the second of these monks known as Abd al-Sayyid al-Malawani. We know he was

intimately involved in the recreation of monumental painting in the Cave Church of Saint Paul in 1712 and 1713. How do you recreate a lost tradition that requires numerous skill, and especially, how do you do this in a remote desert monastery? As a monk and a priest, Abd al-Sayyid knew the iconographic tradition from the medieval paintings at Saint Anthony's and from liturgical texts from the monasteries. Here are two depictions of the three Hebrews. Saint Anthony is on the upper left which we have already seen, and Saint Paul is on the lower right. Abd al-Sayyid's knowledge would've enabled him to devise the subject matter for the Cave Church, but the question remains why, and then how do you execute large-scale paintings without any training? Remember that Christian paintings are power objects that provide points of access to their subjects. Devotion to holy images was a staple of Christian ritual practice. Abd al-Sayyid and possibly one or more other men chose to reinvent a forgotten tradition to celebrate the re-establishment of the monastery. In 1716, a visiting Jesuit priest, Claude Sicard, actually met the painter author, as he's described, of what Sicard called "Sacred Stories Coarsely Painted in the Cave Church." He also wrote that the painter, quote, "was a monk of the convent and that he had never learned to paint which was apparent from his work," unquote, and here, you see our more recent team evoking earlier teams of men in the church reinventing the Coptic tradition of monumental wall painting. Let's look a bit closer at the paintings in question, however, before dismissing them like Sikar did using Saint Isidore as an example. The heads of the saints and the halos were devised with a compass. The point of the compass can still be seen in some places, so in this painting, it's right there, and there's another one over here for this haunch of the horse. A second compass formed the upper body of each saint, so here's the upper body, the circle. Below which legs or robes were attached depending on the dress. Feet are typically shown in profile, so you see the saint's foot in profile here. This mother, who's a mother pleading to a saint to save her children, has her feet going in the same direction facing the saint also in profile. The artist painted arms as simple parallel lines or omitted them altogether in which case he placed open hands in front of figure's chest, so here are the parallel lines for one arm. Here's an example with no arms and just the hands. He then colored the saints using an extremely limited pallet, mostly red, oaker and olive green with black. When he wanted to use white, for example, for the faces and here the horse, he simply left the plaster unpainted. In this view, you can still see the hole from the compass a bit more clearly right here that made the circle for the saint's face and then the two circles of his halo. While these are naive, and they were, after all,

painted by an un-trained artist, they have real presence along with surprising parallels to some 20th century paintings. The circular faces and enormous eyes are clearly similar. The absence of illusionism is part of the power of these paintings and would not have been seen as a limitation to people praying to the saints depicted here. Two of the most dramatic areas are the domed entrance and the high call, or sanctuary, of the 24 Elders. Both of these were added circa 1705. We will briefly explore them today. One enters at the top of the gully, as I mentioned, underneath the church of Saint Michael, and descends a precipitous winding staircase to the cave floor. The equestrian martyrs in the dome and on the walls dominate the space surrounding the viewer with their forcible presence. Once again, I'm showing you before-and-after views. This image captures some of the drama of the space. As you descend the stairs, the horsemen circle above you, and other equestrians gallop down the stairs with you. Let's have a close look at Saint Iskhriun of Qalin who's shown with a bedouin and camels. The story here is that of a bedouin who had barren camels. One day, he decided to pray to Saint Iskhriun, and look at what happened. Look at the sweet baby camel underneath the front of the horse, and here is the bedouin, and this is the saint. There are some fascinating visual parallels between a 1715 manuscript signed by Abd al-Sayyid and paintings in the cave church. This manuscript dates 2 or 3 years after the wall paintings. I'm sure that the similarities between the camels and bedouin stand out to you here, so the camel with the little baby and the bedouin with his beard, camel with the baby underneath here, bedouin with the beard, also very strong color contrasts in various parts of the figures. Also of note are peculiarities of the orthography or handwriting. These clearly indicate that Abd al-Sayyid also painted the texts in the church, so the inscriptions, and you see part of one here in Arabic, but there are also Coptic inscriptions. This is Coptic, and this is Arabic. This suggests that he designed the iconographic program and also possibly that he was the painter. This last point, of course, is debatable. More clues probably exist in the monastery's library which, at present, is not well-studied but should be. The second highlight of the church for our purposes today is the dome sanctuary of the 24 Elders of the apocalypse. This is a depiction of a second coming of Christ and the end of time. The impact of these figures in the space is phenomenal. So we're looking here straight up into a dome. The figures feel like living presences. Christ enthroned sits in a mandorla, so here's a monumental figure of Christ raising his hand seated on a throne in a body halo surrounded by the Four Incorporeal Living Creatures and trumpeting angels and, in a wider circle, the 24 Elders of the apocalypse. Here's a

marvelous detail of some of the elders with crowns seated on thrones and holding censers. In 1726, our friend Abd al-Sayyid became the second of three monks from Saint Paul's to become patriarch. His new name was John XVII. This remote monastery deep in the eastern desert was a powerhouse of Coptic spirituality and authority. Let's sum up. He definitely wrote the inscriptions. He was almost certainly the designer of the iconographic program and possibly also painted the images. Whether or not he was the artist, he clearly had a strong interest in religious images. In 1732, he concentrated the new church of Saint Michael which you will recall is located on top of the Cave Church. With the patriarch on his visit to Saint Paul's was a young orphan named Ibrahim al-Nasikh. No doubt John XVII took him to visit the Cave Church and look at the paintings while they were in the monastery. Ibrahim with his artistic partner Yuhanna al-Armani, an Arminian from Jerusalem, became the most famous and prolific icon painters of the 18th century in Egypt. They were active between 1742 and 1780, so they began their careers with the support of John XVII. Their icons duplicate many details of Cave Church paintings as you see here in this image of Saint Ishkaran on the right. These icons are among many that have been documented by ARCE with USA funding. Reproductions for them are freely available on request. So the style here it totally different, but the subject matter, in many cases, remains the same, the small detail of the dog, and here is that nice little dog. My conclusion, which I begin now, will be very brief. This overview of four monuments dating between the 5th and 18th centuries has highlighted the creativity of the Coptic tradition. We have seen various building designs, painting styles, subject matters and ornamental systems all revealed by our marvelous Italian conservators. It is hard to exaggerate what the projects have told us about Coptic heritage. Here is a view looking up into the semi domes at the Red Monastery prior to conservation, and two test cleanings were done: one here by De Cesaris and one here by Luzi. Now, I'll show you what it looks like afterwards. No one suspected that in Upper Egypt, of all places, people were creating high-quality Early Byzantine art and architecture or that the medieval tradition of Christian painting was so strong in Egypt. The story of the 18th-century revival of monumental wall painting still gives me chills, and once again, I illustrate the ancient group of monks recreating monumental wall painting with the chief conservators here sitting on scaffolding in the dome in the Cave Church of Saint Paul, the dome that's right by the entrance. You can see that baby camel in the top center. Coptic civilization has endured through periods of great wealth and also great persecution. The tenacity of the Copts has always impressed me. It has been an

extraordinary privilege to be part of a quarter of a century of Egyptian-American partnership between USA, ARCE, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism. Our work amounts to the recuperation of the Coptic artistic tradition for art history and world heritage. Everyone involved should feel very proud. Thank you very much, and during our question and answer, I will exit this and show you a laser scan fly-through of the Red Monastery Church that was done by Pietro Gasparri. Can start that. Okay. Louise, I'm all set.

Louise Bertini:

Oh, great. Thank you so much, Betsy. It was an absolutely fascinating lecture. Actually, Betsy, if you open up your question and answer chart ...

Elizabeth Bolman:

Okay. Yes.

Louise Bertini:

You could actually just directly read and respond.

Elizabeth Bolman:

Okay. Great. Great. "Some paintings remind me of those at the Umayyad desert castle of Qasr al-Kharanah in Jordan. Is there any relationship?" Yes, there is a relationship in that the tradition of monumental painting was shared around the Eastern Mediterranean at this time, so obviously, Tariq, you've got a great eye, and I agree with you that there are, in the bigger picture, definitely connections between them, but I would not like to suggest that there were immediate and close connections stylistically.

And, Carlos, "Did ancient Egyptian art influence Coptic art?" Most definitely, it did. The Copts were proud of their Egyptian heritage and continued many iconographic subjects such as the Virgin Mary nursing the Christ Child which appears to be a very direct continuation of the countless depictions of Isis nursing Horus and other Egyptians deities also nursing.

Ah, yes. I mentioned plaster filling the gaps was the original one, and I forgot to tell you why that is. Husannah Abdrabo, thank you very much for the question. So they made it a little bit weaker so that if the church settles at all, if there's a minor earthquake or any restabilizing of the building, the new plaster will crack first and take the stress and hopefully keep any cracks from happening with the historic paintings.

Okay. And Agnes Simansco, one of my amazing doctoral students who's now a professor at Richmond asks me about the churches dating to after the Red Monastery and before the Monastery of Saint Anthony that need completion. Which ones would I prioritize? I would prioritize two that are not far from Esna, Dar al-Shahada and Dar al-Shakhuri, and they both have really striking and important paintings probably ranging from the 10th to the 12th centuries.

Okay. Ryan asks about connections to Nubian art, particularly works in the Faras Cathedral. I tell you, we've got a group of people with a really good eye here. That is another impressive question. Yes, absolutely they share features with Nubian art, with the Faras Cathedral art. The intensity, the frontality, the saturated colors, the schematic stylized patterning instead of interest in creating the illusion that a flat surface is a continuation of the space that you're standing in, all of these elements create parallels.

Okay. Niels, do I think that the artists were brought in to paint these churches, or was there local talent? That's a good question. Well, obviously, at Saint Paul's, it was local talent because it was a self-taught guy, but with respect to the other paintings, they were clearly done by professionals, and I think in most cases, those professionals would've come from a major urban center, but I can't know for sure, and in earlier monasteries in Bawit and Sakkara, so dating from the 5th to the 9th centuries and maybe a little bit later, there are inscriptions where monks call themselves painters, so there's some paintings from Bawit and Sakkara where the monk was clearly untrained and painted his own cell and others that are very professional, and it's perfectly possible that a professional artist retired from work and joined a monastery.

"What materials are used to remove the wall salts?" That is too technical a question for me to answer, Summer. I am extremely sorry, but I would direct you to the chapters on wall-painting conservation in all three of our books.

"The label cherubim at Saint Anthony's has the letter beta above the letter iota. Is that a correction?" I think it probably is a correction. What I think of when I see that, Agnes, is, I think of the guy on the ladder spelling it without the beta and then having the more literate guy on the floor who's telling him what goes where that a beta has to go in there, so that's a very nice detail. Thank you for raising that question.

Why did Islam allow the Copts to create such images and churches without disrupting their activities? Fred, that's a really interesting question, and the

answer for that varies over time. You can look at the Copts and see it as a continuous history of oppression. You can also look at that long history and look at how many Copts survive today and see that as a picture of Coptic tenacity but also as a picture of a willingness on the part of Muslims to coexist with Copts. So Copts were not allowed to have processions in public after the Muslim takeover of Egypt. They were not allowed to have crosses on the outside of their churches, but they were, for the most part, allowed to do what they wanted inside of churches. This clearly created some tension, and, as I said, at different times, different sorts of reactions took place, but it's an interesting heritage and one that really reveals a lot about tolerance on the part of Muslims and also about strength and tenacity on the part of the Copts.

So an anonymous attendee has asked, in the iconography highlighted, especially Shenoute and his reputation as a contraversionalist, do we ever see doctrinal disputes with Calcedonian depicted in art? You guys are so well-informed. I'm extremely impressed. There is one painting in the entire, in all of the subjects, in the Red Monastery that makes it clear that we're looking at a Miaphysite rather than a Calcedonian group of paintings, and that is a ... of Dioscorus, and were looking at the Red Monastery. We're coming around to it here, so right here, let's see. That is either Peter or Discorus. He's at one side or the other of this ... I'm sorry. It's either this one or a guy over here, but I think it's here. Dioscorus was known for his anti-Calcedonian writings, and so his inclusion here tells us that this is a Miaphysite community, but if we didn't have that, we wouldn't be able to tell from the painting if it's one way or the other.

Agnes, again, "Were reproductions of Saint Paul's paintings available to modernist paintings? The similarity is remarkable." It is truly remarkable, and, no, there is no way that modernist paintings would've had any idea about the Saint Paul paintings, but I agree with you.

Okay. The tomb of Aba Shenoute, "If it was his expressed request that his body be hidden, what is the evidence that the tomb is really his?" Thank you. So this is something that I agonized about for a very long time. I believe that Shenoute was performing the role of the perfect ascetic leader saying, "Don't waste any expense on me. Don't give me any pomp and circumstance. I'm no better than anyone else. I want to be buried simply," and his followers after he died, I think, were doing the only thing they could do to respect him which is to create a tomb. I believe it's his tomb because he is in it with that inscription, but I also want to say that while there is

evidence that the burial chamber was walled in, and so we know at one point at least they were going through the motions of having a body in there, there is nothing to say that the monks didn't have the ceremony, put his body in there, wait until everybody left, and then a few of them went in, took it out and hid it someplace in the desert. That's perfectly possible, and the fact that we don't see a lot of damage to the tomb, a lot of indication of where, of people going there and expressing devotion, that suggests that it wasn't thought of for a long time, and people weren't going to it for a long time. Okay. Let's see. So that's one of the ... mysteries, where is Shenoute's body? Thank you for that question.

Wendy Rose. "What were the preventative conservation steps undertaken in these projects?" Specifically, how did the conservators work with the religious community partners to mitigate further soot deposition on the paintings? Well, we don't, actually. So the monks continue to use incense, and they continue to light candles and lamps, and if you go to Saint Anthony's now, you can see a level of soot that's accumulated on the paintings. These churches are in living monasteries, so they belong to the monks. The monks allow us to come in. They allow us to study and document, and then we leave, and we return them to the monastery for ritual practice, and that's just how it works. These are not in museums, so we have to work with the monasteries and acknowledge that they own the paintings.

Okay, Jacob has asked, "Are the paintings in the nave of the Red Monastery currently exposed to atmospheric damage due to lack of coverings?" Yes. Uncovering them from the soot made them more vulnerable. Certainly. So we left a few squares of original soot untouched in the paintings so that 100 years from now, if someone comes along with much better technology and they want to examine the precise components of that soot, they can find it there. The laser scanning, and you see again the flythrough that I'm showing, the laser scanning means that we have pretty close to a perfect three-dimensional record of the church that ... Encompasses not only three dimensionality but also color. So we could recreate the church to scale. We could use some kind of virtual reality headset and explore the church with the laser scan data. We've done an extraordinary amount of documentation in the church, so we've done everything we can to preserve a record, but, indeed. You're absolutely correct, Yakopo, that the paintings are now more vulnerable than they were when they had soot on them.

So Byzantine Coptic art in Upper Egypt, the people who produced the paintings were, I believe, residents of Egypt, so they certainly would not have come from Turkey. The Byzantine Empire in the 5th and 6th century was very interconnected, and so you can see parallels in some of the painting at the Red Monastery with paintings near Milan at Castelseprio or in Rome at Santa Maria Antiqua. There was a large shared culture in which people created paintings, but I would say that all of the artists from the earliest period through the the 18th century were residents of Egypt. Thank you for that question.

More broadly, "Who influenced whom across the Coptic and Byzantine sphere?" That's an excellent question too. I would not see it as a question of one being more dominant over the other. I would see it as a shared tradition, and in the early period at the Red Monastery, they're producing paintings that you could have found anywhere else in the empire. They're part of an empire-wide style. After that, the Coptic paintings are distinctive, and they draw from their Early Byzantine heritage. They draw from contemporary Byzantine art, but they produce their own kind of styles.

So, Robin young, hi, Robin. "Many paintings have a version of a four-pedaled flower which is quite the medieval icon, but here it's appearing in the hidden barrel-haulted church next to Saint Shenoute." Yes. There are four-pedaled flowers in the tomb of Shenoute and also in the Red Monastery paintings on curtains in the eastern lobe, and those are rosettes, and the four pedals represent the cross, so they're representation of the cross as a tree of life, the cross as a source of resurrection and growth. Great detail. Dana, what's the question about the flythrough? I don't understand it, and someone has noted ...

Louise Bertini:

Yeah. I think your flythrough is not showing. I think that's what they're asking.

Elizabeth Bolman:

Oh. It says I'm screen sharing. Oh, what a shame. Okay. Well, so much for ...

Louise Bertini:

Yeah. I think we see your PowerPoint.

Elizabeth Bolman:

Oh, dear. I'm so sorry. Okay. Well, that's certainly not what I intended. It says I'm screen sharing, but we always expect something to go wrong, so that's what went wrong. If you write to me, I have a link to the flythrough. After my signature, you could also search for it on Youtube, and I'm sorry. I thought you were seeing the flythrough.

Okay. Hello, Doctor Bolman. "I was just wondering about how the conservation approaches painting layers that are overlaid on top of each other." That is also a great question. We do not remove layers of paint. We leave layers of paint, so if there is a third-phase painting, and we're dying to know what the first-phase painting looks like, too bad for us. We don't remove it. This is as constructive and ... little destructive an activity or series of activities as possible.

Someone also noticed that the tomb of Shenoute is always closed. That's because it's so delicate, and I regret that. As I understand it, that tomb has been laser-scanned, and it may be possible to work out other ways of experiencing it in the future.

Yes. There's a question about pigments and the blues in the Red Monastery. They are Egyptian blue, the same as you see in ancient Egyptian paintings. They are not lapis.

And Pierre wants to know what type of paper is used in removing the soot. It's rice paper and also, in some cases, just plain tissue paper.

Brenda Baker wants to know, what was our process for deciding which layer of painting should be restored? And the process was that we didn't restore. We conserved, so we didn't ... So you remember that painting of Shenoute? I showed you the grayish-brown line running through the painting where there was a complete area of loss. We conserve the paintings that exist. We stabilize the surface of the wall. I say "we" globally. I don't do any of this. I'm an art historian, not a conservator. But we stabilize the wall and put watercolor paints on the new plaster so that it fades into the background, but if there are two phases or three phases visible at the same time in a part of the church, we simply clean and consolidate them. We don't obscure them, one over the other. There's one exception in the eastern semidome of the Red Monastery Church where there was a sharp and ... debate at the end of the project about whether the confusing eastern semidome, which had a whole hodgepodge of different phases all showing partially at once, whether some of that should unify to show a monumental image of Christ, and that involved partially obscuring

some of the earlier paintings. I was passionately against that decision. The conservators and the monks were passionately in favor of it. Gary Scott, who was then director, hosted a round table of experts to discuss the subject, and he ultimately decided to go with the wish of the monks and the conservators, and from devotional perspective, I can see the legitimacy of that. It's just not what I wanted to have happen. Part of what was obscured was the earliest monumental Christian painting in a church that survives anywhere in the world. It's a painting of an ascension, so for me, that was a very difficult moment, but these projects involve often conflicting points of view, and ultimately, the church belongs to the monks, so there we have it. Thank you for that great question.

What was the function of the space in front of the real altar space? Is this a tradition in the Coptic church? It is a tradition. I'm not able to answer that question liturgically, but if you think of the church as a space that becomes progressively more holy as you move through it to the east, you can see the khurus as creating a kind of buffer zone between the more general space of the nave and the more secretive, sacred and precious area of the sanctuary.

Why would these fillings of cracks not be adjusted and colored to complete the paintings? Okay. Megeth and Judith, that's a great question. Because we don't want to obscure the original impression of the painting. If you decide that you're going to repaint something, you can do so, certainly. The conservators have done so in other monuments in Italy, but when you do that, you lose the ability to see exactly what is the historical painting, what survives of the historical painting. So we approached the Red Monastery almost like an archaeological site preserving all of the evidence in the interest of history and posterity, but there are tons of different styles of conserving and of deciding to reintegrate paintings, so that's the one we picked. Thanks for that great question.

Thomas, "Is there any connect or link between Coptic Church icon painting and Ethiopian Orthodox Church icon painting?" Yes, Tom. There definitely is. The Ethiopian church was under the administration, the ecclesiastical administration of the Coptic church for many centuries, a bishop of the Ethiopian church would be consecrated in Cairo and would serve in Ethiopia, so there was a lot of connection between the two countries, and in the Monastery of Saint Anthony, there is a Byzantine style painting that was commissioned by an Ethiopian king. So really a lot to that story, and a lot has yet to be studied and written about.

Sarah wants to know, do we have other paintings that represent camels in Coptic monasteries? Yes. There are, in fact, a lot of representations in Coptic art not just in wall painting but also in smaller-scale objects like ivories and pilgrimage vials that show Saint Menas with camels. He's the one who's most commonly shown with camels, and if you go to the Modern Coptic Orthodox Church of Saint Menas that is a little bit to the west of Alexandria, you will find enormous numbers of camels depicted with Menas everywhere.

Phoebe. Hi, Phoebe. "I loved your comparison between the motifs and details in iconography versus the manuscript art from the Ottoman period. Were there more examples of these overlaps in the work?" Yes. There were more examples. There were lots of examples. I wanted to show you more, but I had to pack four monuments into a single lecture, so ask William, and he'll send you pictures. That manuscript is one of my favorite things in the world. It's marvelous.

Okay. Adam Nadine, how do you date the elaborate chair with Madonna and child? Are there other examples you know of showing similarities? Yes. I date that the early 13th century. There are lots of examples in wall painting and wood work in the Coptic museum, so that's a great question, and it shows that even though we were just talking about wall paintings today in buildings that there is a lot of interconnection in the larger visual culture in all the media.

Warren. Hi, Warren. You're intrigued by the placement labels at Saint Anthony's. "Do we have other surviving examples from the Eastern Mediterranean?" Just in that manuscript. I'm forgetting the name of the manuscript, Warren. It's a late antique manuscript. Anyway, I have placement labels underneath the four quadrants of scenes in it, but I'm not familiar with placement labels like this that we've found, but I'm not sure that we've really been looking for them, so I certainly would not say that they don't exist. Thanks for that question.

Ooh, Flavia. How nice that you're joining me too. So in the last church, the Cave Church, what kind of technique did the painters use? Did they manage to remake tempera and encaustic? No encaustic, just tempera. Encaustic requires that you keep the pigments in a quasimolten state while you're painting, and that's very elaborate. Encaustic is a much more difficult pigment to work with, so the artist or artists reinvented the use of tempera which, of course, is painting on dry plaster, and it can be made much more easily than encaustic. Thanks, Flavia.

What is the status of conservation at other Egyptian monasteries such as the White Monastery, and also wondering if the newly cleaned paintings at the Dayr al-Suryan Monastery are connected to the Upper Egyptian artistic tradition. Okay. Those are two great questions. The status of conservation under the direction of Stephen Davis from Yale and Jillian Pike, Luigi Alberto, so De Cesaris, Sucato and Ricchi and cleaned some of the medieval paintings but not all. It would be great if someone wanted to take on the project of raising money and conserving the rest of the medieval paintings. They're extremely important. They date from several different moments in the medieval period, and it would be just fantastic. Now, the newly conserved paintings at Dayr al-Suryan definitely have connections, and they also show dissimilarities. They illustrate the complex picture of artistic production in Egypt over the centuries where there typically was not one single style that was being used. There were several different stylistic modes that you could choose from. The closer parallels would be the 13th-century paintings in Dayr al-Suryan and the 13th-century paintings elsewhere. The earlier much more illusionistic really powerful paintings like the annunciation and the enthroned mother and child with the Magi and the shepherds, those are the subject of enormous debate. There's nothing really like them anywhere else that we're familiar with, so we're ... to find tremendous richness in these monasteries.

Jennifer Hinkley, how nice to hear from you too. "Wondering about the source of the pigments. The burgundy and lilacs and blues are so lovely." The source of the pigments is something that's interested me that I've never been able to get an absolutely firm answer on. Very clear that a lot of the pigments were from the areas in Egypt. They were from various stones and minerals that you could find in Egypt. We certainly didn't have lapis, as I said. We had Egyptian blue. Some of the greens are made from verdigris, which you can make yourself in a copper container with urine if you close the copper container and put it someplace warm. Or not the copper container, I'm sorry, a clean pottery container with copper in it, and then you add the urine to it. You close it. You put it near a fire in a warm place for a few weeks, and then when you open it up again, there's green fluorescence on the copper that you can scrape off and use as a source for pigment, but I don't have a good answer for you, Jennifer. I wish I did.

Magda, nice to see you too. "Thanks for the lecture." Okay. You're very welcome. I mentioned Byzantine influence. Now, I very specifically didn't use the word influence. I don't like the word influence because influence suggests an imbalance of power. It suggests that some place like

Constantinople has all the creative activity and energy in the empire, for example, and everywhere else is just kind of passively copying it badly, and I completely reject that model. So for the Red Monastery paintings, I see them as being part of the Early Byzantine world, and so they are connected to paintings, as I said earlier, in Rome and in Milan, so they're not influenced by Byzantium. They are actively contributing to Byzantine visual culture. I showed Byzantine style paintings in Saint Anthony's, the 13th century ones. In that case, what I think we're seeing is someone who was trained in the Byzantine tradition that had after the Arab conquest of Egypt had gone off and developed in a different way than the Egyptian artist did. And so I see, there are several examples as you know as well as I do, Magda, of what we might see as Byzantine style paintings showing up in Coptic manuscripts or in Coptic churches like in Saint Anthony's. So in that case, I would see the situation being one of people having a lot of different stylistic options to choose from and deciding, "Oh, okay. I want to go with this one, so I'm going to hire this kind of an artist." Thank you for that question.

Sandis D'Nar, do I know of any other examples of the presence of Islamic art along Coptic art? Again, I wouldn't see those ornamental motifs as being Islamic. I would see them as being the most fashionable type of decoration that was developed in urban centers like Cairo. It was developed not as a religious matter but by groups of artists of all the three major faiths in Egypt, Islam, Christianity and Judaism all working in the same style, and so we see those kinds of motifs in Saint Anthony's. We see them on metalwork with Christian subjects, on painted glass beakers from the same time period with Christian subjects, and we see it in, for example, the Torah Shrine doors from the Ben Ezra Synagogue which, have been at least on display in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, so thank you for that question.

Osama Handeur, there are also old church in Deir Rifeh, and it connects to the pharaonic civilization. I don't know Deir Rifeh and I would very much like to, so I'm going to look into that, Osama. Thank you for pointing that out to me.

Kathryn, "Do you see any relationship between the rock-cut church at Saint Paul with the early rock-cut churches in eastern Tigray, Ethiopia beginning in the late first millennium, C.E.?" No. Honestly, I don't any more than just that often, when people had a lot of soft, porous rock like in Cappadocia, so

they just chose to delve into it and live in it, but that's a very interesting question too.

Janell, the question is about conservation. For all the locations I talked about, what was the main cause for the paint loss? Let's see. Unbound pigments, water infiltration, insect activity. Additionally, you'd find black mold obscuring the paint layers in addition to the disfiguring soot and dirt layers. No mold because everything was dry, and I say was because the monasteries are expanding agriculturally at a tremendous rate, and so ground water is rising, and the climate is changing, but historically, no mold to the best of my knowledge. Damage was from water coming in through leaks and from, in some cases, for example, at the Red Monastery, the second phase paintings had a lot of the encaustic, that wax-based paint, and the third phase paintings sometimes flaked off where there was encaustic underneath because they didn't have a good grip on the surface because it was really smooth. There were definitely insect nests, a huge wasp net in the Red Monastery, and there were insect nests in Saint Anthony. The insects weren't the primary source of damage. That said, there are termites now at the Red Monastery drawn by the water, by the rising ground water, by the changing climate, and so far, Nicholas has been waging a heroic battle against them, but it's possible, Luigi said this before he passed away, it's possible at some point that they might become interested in the straw that's mixed in with the plaster that supports the paintings in the Red Monastery, and if that happens, it's all over. The whole thing comes down, but inshallah it won't.

Let's see. Ang Sarazaki would like to ask about the laser-scanning technology. That is out of my scope of familiarity. Nicholas Warner and I wrote a report on the laser scanning in the Red Monastery that is published in the bulletin of the American Research Center in Egypt. It came out maybe, I don't know, 5 or 6 years ago. It might be available online. I'm sure Louise can tell us if ARCE is online. Yeah. I think that's the best I can say. If you want me to put you in touch with the laser scanner, you can write to me. You can find my e-mail online at Case Western Reserve, esb87@case.edu, but you can find it also on the web, and I'll put you in touch with him, and he can hopefully answer your questions.

Dr. Chavan, is there a future plan to ensure the protection of these murals? Protection is a really difficult thing. Certainly the monks are using the churches, but they're also doing their best not to damage the paintings, certainly. In some cases, I know with visitation, groups are controlled and

not allowed to go and touch the walls. In the Red Monastery, Nicholas and his team put up barriers so that you can't actually go right up to the wall and touch the walls. There is a proposal for a roof around not the very top, but below the clerestory level in the nave in the Red Monastery church. There's a proposal for a roof that would extend just ... enough to provide shade for the medieval paintings. That plan has not yet been approved by the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism, but I hope that it will be. I showed a slide made from laser scanning data that includes that roofing and the shadow from it.

Are there ways to detect by scanning the lower layers? There might be now, Janice. I tried to do that with a Greek team maybe, I don't know, almost 20 years ago, and they weren't able to do it at that time, but technology changes so quickly. I'm not aware of any way to do that now, but I would not be able to say one way or another for sure.

Katarina Williams, were the Coptic-bound codices from the monastery documented and digitized? We had a very small window of permission from the monk who was in charge of the library in the Monastery of Saint Paul to take digital photographs of that one manuscript. We were not allowed much access to the library. I'm sure there was concern about causing damage to the manuscripts which we would certainly had done our best not to do. I'm not familiar with a digitization project at Saint Paul's, but there is a massive and fantastic one going on under the direction of Michael Phelps in collaboration with the monks at the Monastery of Saint Catherine, particularly the head of the library, and they are doing exceptionally high quality, cutting-edge digitization, and I think that Father Maximous has had that done at Saint Anthony's also. So there is some movement to digitize the manuscripts, but one always has to have the permission of the monks in charge of the manuscripts or of the Coptic Pope. There's an amazing library in Cairo in the Patriarchate that would be fantastic to digitize that. It's got a lot of unknown stuff in it, so this is an ongoing challenge. Great question.

Jennifer, again. Would local populations have had any access to Monastic churches? That is a great question. I would have said no except that we know from Shenoute's sermons that he specifically addressed elite people from the nearby Panopolis or visiting from elsewhere who would come and listen to his sermons in the church. So there's a lot of documentation in the codices that record the rules for the White Monastery Federation. There are hundreds and hundreds of very specific rules, and many of them

emphasize that people from the outside are not allowed in the monastery, but then we have these exceptions where special people are allowed in to listen to services. Yeah. Great question.

Kelly Arrington, do these Coptic churches also house early textiles? Most of the textiles from Egypt that have been found were found buried in the sands in tombs or other kinds of burial contexts. If you want to learn more about that, there was recently an absolutely epic exhibition in Washington that was held at two locations, the Textile Museum and Dumbarton Oaks. There is a fantastic catalog for that, and there's also a lot of information online on the Dumbarton Oaks website. I would strongly encourage you to look at that. So these ... would certainly have had fantastic textiles, but the ones that we have preserved were not, to my knowledge, mostly found in monasteries.

John Habib, in the Church of Saint Anthony, there is a scene of the resurrection above the altar. On the left, two ... seem to be overlapping each other. Were they painted at the same time, or was one of them added at a later time? I'm sorry, John. I don't know which painting you're actually talking about, so I'm not able to answer that question. I apologize. I'm not sure what you're thinking of, but thank you for the question, and I wish I could answer it.

Dr. Shabahn, the names of the chemicals used in the cleaning, the consolidation processes, those are all published in chapters written by the conservators in the three books that we published, one on the Monastery of Saint Anthony, "Monastic Visions," one on the Cave Church of Saint Paul the Hermit. That was edited by William Lyster, and then the recent one, 2002, of the Red Monastery. So you can find three publications that talk in detail about the different conservation interventions and materials. Thank you for that question.

Carl Pietri, are the Arabic inscriptions limited to naming figures that appear in the paintings? Are there any inscriptions that translate liturgical material from the Coptic? There are Arabic inscriptions of psalm passages in the full-roof ceiling area of Saint Anthony's. There are almost decorative-like Arabic abbreviations that might have had some kind of significance, but in the 13th century, most liturgical manuscripts were written in Coptic and Arabic simultaneously, so there is a lot of Christian Arabic literature, so Christian material written in Arabic by the 13th century. The first language of the Copts was Arabic, so there's a lot of rich material there to be explored.

Sean Gilsdorf. Hi, Sean. "So, as I know, both the Red and White monasteries were established in a region also renown for textile production at Panopolis." Yes, indeed. Do we know much of anything about the use of decorative textiles in these richly painted monastic buildings and the monastery's connection to textile production and trade? Well, in the Red Monastery, there are actual painted textiles, and there are paintings on some of the columns that look as if they're illustrating textiles that were often stretched around columns for decorative purposes. The curtains that have the most liturgical significance in the Red Monastery Church are in the eastern lobe, mostly, and they're in niches in the middle zone, and they show the four-leaf rosette symbolizing the cross and also pomegranates, and for a very long time, I asked myself what these curtains were hiding, what was behind the curtain, and it finally struck me that the curtain was the point, that the curtain reminds us that the church is a replica of the tabernacle of Moses that was made with textiles. So the tabernacle was made of textiles. It was understood in the Christian tradition to ... the flesh of Christ, so through the images of the curtains, you can see the church as being the body of Christ and the tabernacle of Moses. So that's a more theologically oriented answer. Shenoute also put quite a lot of importance on his own textiles for his own clothing that were woven not in Panopolis but by the women in the women's community associated with the White Monastery. Becky Krawiec has written a really important work on that subject, so that's a good question, and I'm not really answering it because we don't have examples of direct connection in the earlier period. In the early 14th century, there's a painted textile now in the Coptic museum that shows an archangel that I believe was painted by the same person who painted one of the last known depictions from the 14th century of the longstanding Coptic tradition of wall painting, but that would be a painted textile and not actually a woven one, so thank you for that difficult question. Anonymous attendee, can the various paintings discovered be used to reconstruct the liturgical vestment tradition in the Coptic church? That project certainly has some validity, but the clothing that people are wearing in paintings is not necessarily a snapshot of what existing reality was like, and Thelma Thomas is currently completing a very important book on textiles in early monasticism, so I would direct you to keep an eye out for Thelma Thomas' forthcoming book to get a much better answer to that great question.

And I think finally, could you please write here the last link that I spelled? Well, I spelled my e-mail address which I will type for you, and then for some reason, my mouse isn't working. There it is. So I sent that.

The library in Cairo belongs to the Patriarch. It belongs to the Pope, so it's in the patriarchal compound in Cairo, and any comments about the Cave Church in Mokattam area, my parents used to live in Mokattam.

What are the future projects that you'll be working on in Egypt? Thank you. Hebab, that's an amazing church. I don't have any comments about it except that it's just spectacular, and as far as future projects in Egypt, still working on publishing a couple of books, and I'm editing a book, so I'm working on publishing things and on my administrative duties in Cleveland, and I do not have a site project planned at present although I am pining to return to Egypt. I was supposed to be in Egypt right about now and had to cancel my plans due to the plague, so I'm missing Egypt terribly. I hope that this illustration of the amazing things that can be done in partnership at Coptic monuments will inspire other people to decide to donate money and to support additional projects.

Rosette, "From the Egyptian people, thanks and love to the American people and each and every person who put time, effort and anything in it. Rosette Phyllis, Egyptian conference interpreter and former part-time translation faculty at AUC." Rosette, that brings tears to my eyes, and I thank you so much. That is a perfect place for us to stop. You're all really amazing. Louise, thank you for the opportunity.

Louise Bertini:

Yeah. No, thank you so much, and you're a trooper: 83 questions answered. I've never seen something like that, so thank you, Dr. Bolman. Thank all of you who joined us and stayed to the end, and on the note of donating, if you do want to help to continue to preserve, not only Coptic heritage but Egyptian heritage in general, you can of course visit our website, arce.org, and we always are in hopes to continue our partnership with Egypt to continue to preserve this amazing heritage for future generations to come, so thank you all so much for joining, and look forward to hopefully seeing you all at our next lecture, so take care. Bye.