Abydos is one of the oldest cities and one of the most important sacred sites of ancient Egypt. It stretches approximately 11 kilometres (6.8 miles) west of the Nile, near the modern Egyptian towns of El Araba El Madfuna and El Balyana in Upper Egypt. Abydos was home to the first royal cemetery in Egypt (c.3000-2650 BCE) and the primary cult place of the god Osiris. Dr. Deborah Vischak, Assistant Professor of Ancient Art and Archaeology at Princeton Institute of Fine Arts, NYU will be sharing the most current excavations of this ancient Old Kingdom cemetery of mud brick mastabas, dating from 2600 BCE.

This talk will cover the first three seasons’ work, focusing on the areas of new research and site management. The mastabas at the site represent the first evidence of building at this location by the non-royal local community since it had first become the royal cemetery around 3000 BCE. The mastabas were built atop a brewery installation from the Early Dynastic period, most likely associated with the royal building activity elsewhere at the site. This new material represents rare examples from these time periods and will help to develop our understanding of the transition from the Early Dynastic period to the Old Kingdom in Abydos and more broadly in the region.

The Expedition is also engaged in extensive conservation and site management projects. Work continues on the Shunet el-Zebib, the only standing royal enclosure from the Early Dynastic Period, and a new
A conservation project focused on the Ramses II portal temple has recently begun, as has work around the Osiris temple at Kom el-Sultan. These projects are a crucially important part of the Expedition's work, and will be considered within the long history of building, decay, and restoration over 5000 years at Abydos.

In addition to her post at Princeton, Dr. Vischak is also Assistant Professor of ancient Egyptian Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. She is the author of Community and Identity in Ancient Egypt: the Old Kingdom Cemetery at Qubbet el-Hawa, and is co-director of the North Abydos Expedition. She specializes in ancient Egyptian art history and archaeology, with a secondary focus in the art and archaeology of the ancient Middle East. Her work explores the importance of spatial context, embodied experiences of landscape and material culture, the communicative role of style, community identities, the social construction of ancient visuality, the significance of difference in material culture, and the agency of the people who produced it.

Dr. Vischak is also co-director of the North Abydos Expedition with Dr. Matthew Adams of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. The North Abydos Expedition concession, granted by permission from the Ministry of Antiquities in Egypt, holds the remains of material culture built over 4000 years, including vast cemetery fields dating from the early Old Kingdom (c. 2600 BCE) through the end of the Roman period (c. 300 CE). Currently the Expedition is focusing on the conservation and site management of the Shunet el-Zebib, a massive, mudbrick monument built for the last king of the 2nd Dynasty (c. 2650 BCE), and the excavation of an area that includes an early Old Kingdom cemetery and the remains of an Predynastic brewery at the north edge of the site.

If you are not yet a member of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) Orange County Chapter, now is a great time to sign up. It’s your chance to enjoy many ARCE membership benefits and become part of our mission of facilitating the study, excavation, preservation and renovation of important historical artifacts and sites from the Pharaonic through the Medieval Period.

Sincerely,
ARCE-OC - American Research Center in Egypt Orange County Chapter

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